This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

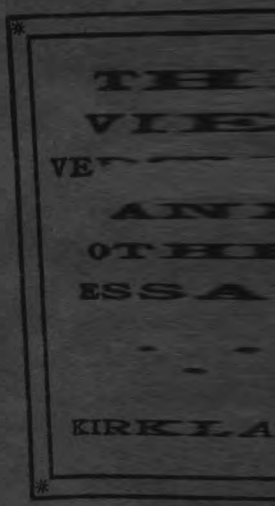
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NEDL TRANSFER
HN 1852 $



Digitized by Google

KD 498

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE VIEW VERTICAL
AND OTHER ESSAYS

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE VIEW VERTICAL
AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY
WINIFRED KIRKLAND
Author of "The Joys of Being a Woman," etc.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1920

Digitized by Google

KD 498

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
BOUGHT FROM
DUPLICATE MONEY
AUG 15 1940

COPYRIGHT, 1920, BY WINIFRED KIRKLAND

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

The View Vertical	3
Confessions of a Scene-Maker	15
With the Why-nots	23
Stylish Stouts	28
The Friends of our Friends	33
An Argument for Absence	38
On Being and Letting Alone	43
A Soliloquy on Sorting	48
Drudgery as a Fine Art	55
The Perils of Telepathy	62
Family Phrases	69
Hold Izzy!	84
On Adopting One's Parents	90
In Defense of Worry	97
Courtesies and Calories	103
Back-Street Philosophy	108
April Burial	116
Grace before Books	129
Some Reasons for Being Rejected	134
The Story in the Making	139
The Wizard Word	146
The Pleasures of the Preposition	153
Faces in Fiction	159

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

Background Past and Present	179
A Portrait for the Contemporary	186
Victuals and Drink in Jane Austen	191
The Man in the Dictionary	198
Robinson Crusoe Re-Read	211
Shakespeare on the Servant Problem	217
A Boy in a Book	227
Americanization and Walt Whitman	236
Poetry by the Pennyworth	244
A Little Excursion in a Hymn-Book	252
Print and Pulpit	260
Gift-Books and Book-Gifts	265

Digitized by Google

THE VIEW VERTICAL
AND OTHER ESSAYS

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE VIEW VERTICAL

THE chief result of the war is that it has left everybody's nerves jumpy. Nations and individuals give too much evidence that they have been lying awake at night, listening to burglars stealthily trying the cellar windows. Our jangled nerves seem unable to respond to the simple fact that for some time now our jewel cases and our watches and our dining silver have been obstinately reappearing each morning in familiar security. Despite this reassuring circumstance, sleeplessness dominates the intercourse of mind with mind, which, whether expressed in art or literature, in newsprint or conversation, is made up of wan-eyed recountings of the new things each of us has found to be afraid of the night before. At a time when a holocaust has left the nerves of humanity raw and quivering, it is well we should stoutly take ourselves in hand to conquer a universal neurasthenia.

The best nerve treatment seems to be to convince the patient of what is the matter with him, and then to trust to his own common sense to restore his equilibrium. A little examination into the nature of all sleepless-

Digitized by Google

ness may suggest a wider application of its cure, and a readier caution in accepting as reliable any verdicts reached in the night-watches.

It is strange that we choose night-time to solve all the puzzles of the cosmos, that sturdy old cosmos which by day we are inclined to leave to its own doing or undoing. How many solutions reached at 3 A.M. have ever proved valid upon arising? What more worthless than the conclusions of an insomniac? Who knows this fact so well as the insomniac himself? The truth is, we are so helplessly irrational in the small hours that it even appears rational to lie awake. At night we are mastered by the fallacy that we are doing useful thinking, a fallacy immediately recognized when in the morning we resume the vertical. Why do we not oftener summon some of our daylight reason to counteract the unreason of the night? The newer psychological methods seek by argument to prove to the subconscious self the futility of insomnia in the hope that this obdurate subconscious self may thus at last be sufficiently convinced to grant us slumber.

It is the horizontal attitude of the body combined with enveloping darkness that is the natural condition of physical impotence and of mental obscurity. For their power over us

Digitized by Google

the horrors of the horizontal reach back into the prehistoric. It has taken us æons to climb to the perpendicular. When we revert to the horizontal, we revert in some degree to our helplessness in the primordial ooze. We no longer front the stars with a brain that tops a vertical spinal column, but, lying down, incur once more the nameless perils of those days when we were mere hysterical amœbæ, shuddering and changing shape with every ripple of circumstance. The primal slime ever pulls us down, while the ultimate stars ever pull us upright; between the two lies our long evolution toward the attainments accruing to the vertical: first we floated in the ooze, ourselves possessing neither top nor bottom; then we progressed to dominate a little our slimy surroundings, either swimming in or crawling upon them, but slowly advancing to the amphibian's distinction of a brain situated nearer to the sky than was his stomach; then, gradually, by some celestial attraction, we were hauled up and up and up until we passed into the stage when four feet lifted us above the mud, but still held our head parallel to it, therefore still horizontal, still palpitant to the perils awash in the near-by water, to the dangers stalking in the grass adjacent to our ears. By degrees, the emerging ape rose higher,

Digitized by Google

arriving at such meager intuitions of his future powers as were possible to a brain no longer parallel with earth, but aslant at times toward heaven. The monkey man was never faithful to the perpendicular, frequently flopping back from two feet to four, or subjecting himself to the mental instability — naturally attractive to a prehensile character — of hanging from his support head down!

When we lie supine in the dark our prehistoric impotence dominates both our intellect and our emotions. The sleepless man cannot attain to clear thinking in an atmosphere reminiscent of a period when he was eyeless against the obscuration of surrounding mud and mist, nor can he aspire to courage in a position that pulls him back to a time when he could not even strike at hostile circumstance. The horizontal heart slips back to its reptilian sluggishness. By force of primeval habit the insomniac on his back upon his bed can be neither clear-headed nor brave-hearted. Note how, even among the lowest orders of attainment, the fish or the snake, to lie upon the native element belly upward is always evidence of the supreme surrender.

The sleepless man usually lies upon his back, and so much the worse for him, for even in lying down there is a differing degree of

Digitized by Google

weakness between prone and supine. The soldier when forced to be horizontal never lies supine, but prone, in position for pulling trigger upon an approaching enemy. Even in our moments of bitterest rebellion against circumstance, when we own our powerlessness but do not acquiesce, we may cast ourselves down; but in these conditions we manage to fall face under, still possessing spirit enough to bite the enemy earth or pound it. It is only when we have utterly given up that we turn over upon our backs. Even when we indulge in the supine under happiest conditions — as beneath the sun and shade of a summer tree, watching the lazy wanderings of the clouds — our attitude, while freed from terrors of the horizontal, still partakes of its helplessness, its inconsequent thinking, its relaxed resolution. The brave sick are, indeed, to be commended, for they fight not only pain and weakness, but all the nameless debility of mind and soul growing out of our evolution from the horizontal to the vertical.

Both our vocabulary and our experience prove to us our respect for the perpendicular position. We have scorn for the invertebrate, especially when human, because the creature is incapable of standing up. Our slang expresses contempt for any one who takes his

Digitized by Google

luck "lying down," and equally exalts the man who "stands up" to his fate. For each of us the perpendicular is always the attitude of resolution, of sanity, of serenity. Lives there anywhere an insomniac who does not know that nothing he thinks when lying awake is true, that nothing he feels is so? Does not sanity return to us even as we plant foot upon the floor in the morning? Does not humor begin to warm our chilly fears even while we brush our hair for breakfast? Erect, we are proof against the panics of the remote amœba within us; vertical, we cannot slide back to the unstable mentality of the monkey in our make-up. Only when we stand up are we secure in our full inheritance as men. Only as our heads approach the sun do we share his vigor and lucidity.

A further examination into the nature of insomniac thinking reveals the fact that the humor that visits us when upon our backs is as unreliable as is the terror. When we are lying down, both our fun and our fear are grotesquely alien to reality. To both alike,

> "the fly upon the pane
> May seem the great ox of the distant plain."

The horizontal fastens its blight upon our comic sense whether we dream our jokes in

Digitized by Google

actual slumber, or conceive them as we toss in wakefulness. So long as we lie abed our fun is fallacious. We have all had the experience of dreaming dreams that appeared to our sleeping mind exquisitely ludicrous. When we got up in the morning we remembered the night vision perfectly, but the comic element had become so banal as to make us feel shaky for our reason. The supine position infects equally any humor that may visit us when we lie not dreaming, but awake. The sleepless man's merriment is either sardonic or hysterical. It is tainted by all that nameless insecurity that belongs to the small black hours of the night-watches. The humor of insomnia harks back to the cave-man's bravado, to the monkey's antic efforts to divert the boa constrictor. The ape may grin, in order to conceal either fatuousness or perturbation, but he cannot twinkle, he cannot chuckle, and neither can the human being when sleepless. Instead, the treacherous view horizontal transports him instantly back to the primitive, and beyond that to the primordial. If you want either to fight well, or to laugh well, you must stand up to do it. Now, nobody can help being afraid when alone in the dark with insomnia; the tendency is atavistic and inescapable; but the best way of going to sleep is

Digitized by Google

to remember how surely vigor will return with the vertical the moment our feet grip the floor in the morning. To the devil with the ape and the amœba that rule our vigils in the darkness! In the morning the sun winks a genial eye at us across the eternal mountains, and wags his great red head in mirth at our night-time fidgets.

When we scrutinize all the aspects of sleeplessness, and investigate the treacheries of the view horizontal, as we are each as individuals betrayed by it, we cannot doubt that this poor old world as a whole is to-day suffering an acute attack of insomnia. Where but in the ravings of sleepless nights could it have conjured up the fears that have occasioned the convulsive legislation, the crazed actions, the frantic news columns, of these last years? Poor old nerve-shattered world, it needs to go and lie under a tree and take a nap. Unless all civilization is to slip back to a monkey-madness, unless our sanity is to flop down on all fours, we need to stand up and perceive by the means of the view vertical that really nobody wants to eat us. If our civilization is worth making such a fuss about, why should it not have a little more confidence in its own indestructibility? The morning sunshine is the best germicide for the sleepless sickness,

Digitized by Google

and both we and the sun have been rising pretty regularly every morning for a good many generations, and since human evolution appears as yet far short of finality, we shall probably continue so to rise for a good many generations to come.

Gazing back into the abysses of the view horizontal from which evolution has been persistently fishing us out, as if some patient rod and line were ever tugging us up to the view vertical, we can rightly appraise our constant tendency to revert to panic, and no longer deem a mere atavistic instinct worthy of consideration. As when we look back at our past development, it is possible for us to experience over again the tremors of that far-off amœba within us, so it is also possible, when we look ahead at the upward climb still before us, for us to taste in advance the exultation of the emergent angel. It may be our future destiny ever to be drawn sunward, always erect, always head uppermost. The patiently evolved view vertical may thus be extended into an ever surer perspective which shall reveal to us all earth-doings as truly proportioned as is the living map spread beneath a soaring airship. Gazing from that height we may behold all the woven roads of past history, and watch, as if they were busy

Digitized by Google

ants, the tiny men and women moving there, still going briskly about their deathless concerns. Shaken as we are to-day by ephemeral volcanoes, by evanescent cataclysms, we sometimes forget that the past is inalienably ours, all its merry people, all its happy by-paths. Still may we offer thanks to Heaven for our heritage of immortal books: Robinson Crusoe still wakes from shipwreck upon a desert shore; the big voice of great-heart Johnson still rumbles from the pages of Bozzy, and Hetty Thrale, and Hannah More; the twinkling pen of Jane Austen still paints a cosmos framed in a village window; beneath all transient class struggles Shakespeare still depicts the democracy of the human soul.

From that windy high perspective to which our future shall lift us, we shall look down not only on the past, but on the present, and laugh at the night-fears that conjured up any menace to its safety. We shall see as we stand secure in air, gazing down, that eternal ramparts forever protect the tender sanctities of family life, and all the busy comedy of human relations. Whatever forces may seem to rock our present world, human character somehow persists endlessly whimsical, and still presents an inexhaustible fund for observation and for the gossip of chatty pens. Look-

Digitized by Google

ing down at contemporary life from some cloudbank we shall see that while earthquakes are rattling the locks of the front doors, there are even at this moment plenty of people to be discovered cultivating pure fun like a bed of hardy perennials in the backyard.

From that sun-swept altitude, to which our ever-developing view vertical will some day lift us, we shall behold not only the past and the present, but also the future as a rolling map below us. We shall be high above the mists, and the jolly sun twinkling down over our shoulder will in a flash dispel our vaporous imaginings of the night, revealing those dragon shapes we tried to fight as being mere clouds assembled with the harmless intention of watering the earth. We shall perceive, perhaps, that the rivers of unrest are merely following the commendable ancient practice of all rivers to wriggle to the sea.

Even though we are yet too earth-bound to soar except in fancy, we may even now benefit by the tonic air belonging to that windy vantage-point-to-be. If we can maintain the view vertical — feet to the sturdy green earth, head to the jocund sun — we shall be able to laugh the poor old world out of its insomniac terrors. Even though we may

Digitized by Google

be a bit wan with sleeplessness, if we stand straight, we shall recognize our panics as being mere figments of the night, and springing up at sunrise to our heritage of the perpendicular, we shall bid each other the top of the morning.

Digitized by Google

CONFESSIONS OF A SCENE-MAKER

I WAS lucky enough to be born to a quick temper. It is my only heirloom, but a priceless one, coming to me through unbroken generations who appreciated its possibilities and kept it free from tarnish by active use. We have had duels and daggers in our family and feuds so sizzling hot that even quite ancient limbs of the family tree still emit a distinct odor of scorching. In every generation my ancestors prance and dance through our archives in superb vitality of inexhaustible rage. I am possessed of a tropical grandsire of British extraction who if the joint was underdone used to summon the cook to the dining-room in order that he might hurl the offending morsel in her face. Dear gamy old sport, how I should have loved that grandfather! What bouts royal we might have enjoyed! I should not have had to prick him on by patient and studied insult as I do the lily-livered folk who form most of my acquaintance. A word, a glance merely, and he and I should have hurtled forth to combat. What glorious buffets we should have given and taken! We should have let blood in a

Digitized by Google

dozen places, and having thoroughly purged ourselves of all superfluous spleen, and cleared the atmosphere of all accumulated thunder, how happily we should have sunk back upon repose — no pusillanimous apology, no rancorous reconciliation, but the peace of perfect geniality and understanding! A forbear after my own heart, that. I wish I had such about me nowadays, but my present-day ancestors are of quite another color.

In fact, my immediate family are such pacific folk that in my infancy they actually sought to restrain me in my demonstration of my natural talents, to such an extent, indeed, that my sense of the value of my most prominent characteristic was largely obscured. Children are rarely original thinkers; I own that for long I was hampered by conventional opinions on the subject of temper. Being daily instructed and energetically punished to this end, I did for a time actually believe that to cast myself upon the pavement in a frenzy at being invited to promenade in a direction contrary to my desires, or to attach myself tooth and nail to the person of a refractory playmate, was an exhibition unworthy of myself. Again, my early training caused me frequently to squander much emotion in remorse. I have been known to pay

Digitized by Google

for five minutes of passion by five hours of penitence, a histrionic expenditure distinctly to be avoided, as one thus finds one's emotional resources depleted the next time that occasion imperatively demands a fresh outlay of choler. Nowadays I never waste myself in remorse, but thriftily save myself for my rages. In childhood's hour I was guilty of ideals — though I never sank so low as to attain them — as to the nobility of self-control. In maturity I advocate the expediency of a temper judiciously uncontrolled.

I was in my teens before any filtering of this new light began to penetrate my mind, for I now noticed a change of attitude in my relatives. Whereas they had before punished, now that I was too big to punish, they sought to pacify. Their conduct was perfectly consistent; both courses had root in the same principle, namely, that the majority of mankind will do almost anything for the sake of peace. This it is that makes the course of a firebrand so smooth and inviting.

While yet in my salad days I discovered that I could get almost anything I wanted by making a scene about it. The success with which I have ever since acted in accordance with this knowledge is due simply to the fact that most people hate scenes. My kinsfolk

Digitized by Google

and friends, like humanity at large, generous in all else, are parsimonious in regard to emotion. They will lay down for me their money or their lives, but if they can help themselves they will not hand out to me their emotions. Spare them those, and they will let me have my way. Money is power, perhaps; I never had any, so I don't know; but that scene-making is power I know and have experienced. Since all one wants in life, after all, is merely what one wants, why not get it by the most immediate method? Why take the trouble to be a millionaire when all the world will let you have what you want if you will only kick and scream for it? When one's family or one's friends have all slunk like whipped curs from a red and riotous row, the manufacturer thereof is left master of the situation to taste to the full the toothsomeness of having one's own way.

Thus it is that I have come to regard my ability to make scenes as my most valuable asset, for I can make a scene out of almost anything. If need be, I can enter the most phlegmatic concourse, and my coming is as that of a terrier among tabby cats. I can descend upon the most placid of breakfast tables and leave it a perfect welter of emotions. There is a ridiculous old adage that it

Digitized by Google

takes two to make a quarrel; fudge! I could quarrel with anybody about anything at any moment; I say it with all due humility, for my skill merely comes of having conscientiously kept myself in condition.

Let no one imagine that I am so base as to employ my talents solely for my own advantage. Scene-making has altruistic possibilities. I frequently use it as a means of restraint upon evil tendencies in others. I have a brother prone to cigarettes; presto, the merest whiff of tobacco throws me into spasms! He is a dear, domestic chap, worth making a bit of an effort for; I congratulate myself that I have saved him health and happiness by making home too hot to hold his cigarettes. Himself untainted by the odious perfume, he always finds me the coziest of household accessories.

Then there is my pale friend possessed of an unconquerable affection for red. It is a color that in a wink's time wipes off all her loveliness, leaving only ashen pallor in its place. Now does this friend appear before me with but a vestige of the obnoxious color attached to her person — the music of those of Bashan is as nothing compared with my bellowing. She is the mildest of mortals, and, as a consequence of my aversion, she wears in

Digitized by Google

my presence those blues that do so easily bedeck her. Thus do I preserve her intact from the evil results of her own ill-taste. In blue she finds me ever the most genial and gentle of comrades..

Observe carefully, however, my treatment of both brother and friend, you who are seriously considering taking up scene-making for a profession as I have done. Pray do the thing artistically. Always become angry advisedly, coolly. I make it a rule never to rage except when I want something; otherwise I am so amiable that it's worth anybody's while to keep me so. You can't make ill-temper valuable to yourself except by making your good-temper valuable to your friends. You must have your glorious flashes of gentleness; nobody tries to buy peace of the perpetually cross-grained. Sunniness, with perpetual threatening of explosion if crossed, is the best policy. I have made myself pretty well understood on this point. My acquaintance know that they need never fear any cherishing of rancor on my part. I have practiced until I can control the most headlong rage in an instant. My friends know that smiles and sunshine are at their disposal in that moment (but never the fraction of a second sooner) in which they cease to oppose me.

Digitized by Google

For those, and for those only, whom these confessions may fire to emulation, I here utter one modest aside. The most serious menace to my career has not been from without, but from within. It is easy enough to reduce the multitude to the touch-not-the-bomb attitude of mind; it's the attitude of your own mind that you can't always control. To be a thoroughgoing scene-maker you should be devoid of humor; otherwise your best-arranged scenic effects will be constantly threatened with descent from low tragedy to high comedy. I have a few friends who have been dastardly enough to discover my vulnerable point. They have dared even in my most empurpled and embattled moments to try to make me laugh, and in a few notable occasions they have even dared to succeed. As far as those friends are concerned, it is verily all up with me. I lie in their hands tame as a pre-exploded firecracker; but fortunately for my peaceful course of violence their number is few. On the other hand, the number of those who can be controlled by the menace of an outbreak is still the vast majority of my acquaintance. To those intending to put my confessions to proof I can freely say that you can count to almost any extent on the innate love of peace that exists in the heart of all

Digitized by Google

humanity. As for me, I now have my friends so pleasantly reduced in spirit, have established so genially my reputation for ungovernable rage, that I merely have to look a little explosive and my desires are hurriedly meted out to me. I believe that I now see gleaming before me my ultimate goal, the purpose beyond the purpose, for I believe that I have succeeded in becoming so notoriously violent that I can soon afford to give up my temper altogether and indulge my natural sweetness of disposition with impunity.

Digitized by Google

WITH THE WHY-NOTS

ONE intention in creating people so different was that some of us might have the fun of classifying all the rest. The pleasure of pigeon-holes is their possibilities of rearrangement. But there is one compartment whence those who enter never return; it is the little limbo of the Why-nots. Once a Why-not, always a Why-not; but there is no cruelty in the Why-not's creation or his classification; for his is the most comfortably padded character of all humanity. If you seek to describe a Why-not you will find first that he is a person you never ask to play with you. Why-nots cannot play. True, they have their gambolings of elephantine mirth, but if you join, you are likely to be a little shoved or trampled; for they have never learned either in jest or earnest that graceful veering away from impact which makes the aerial dance of genuine conversation. The Why-nots are always talkative, they are never conversational. One reason that the Why-nots always talk is that one always lets them; it is easier than argument, especially when, by definition, the Why-nots possess a plane of intercourse where

Digitized by Google

argument cannot enter. Their most distinguishing characteristic is their panoply of logic.

I find that my Why-nots, when women, are likely to be frumpy in costume. They are flat-heeled and fearless. They are capable of wearing a three-year-old suit, and yet walking Fifth Avenue as if they owned New York — Why not? What conceivable argument has our craven following of fashion to support it? I have even known Why-not women who practiced bare feet within their home precincts, and were obviously healthier for it. Why not? By what possible reason could one have asked them to sacrifice vigor to custom? I was once walking with a Why-not lady along a steep street surmounted by a telegraph pole; my companion was a woman of sixty, silver-haired, comfortably bonneted, splendidly athletic. She gravely proposed to climb the pole for the view, and did, with agility. Why not? Why should I have stood at the bottom, thanking Heaven for deserted windows and doorways and the remoteness of a policeman? If the policeman had appeared, I have no doubt she would have given him withering proof of her sanity, together with an alarming revelation of her knowledge of her civic rights. Yet why should he have

Digitized by Google

thought her insane? The view was glorious, and she could climb. Why not? The great trouble with the Why-nots is that they are so insanely sane.

One's chief grievance against the band is that one's conscience is always cudgeling one to account for one's animosity, since the Why-nots are good folk. They pay their bills and keep the commandments, if not the conventions. Not all good people are Why-nots, but all Why-nots are good people. Our graceless levity sometimes prevents our seeing that it is the Why-nots who have made the world the orderly place it is, for the Why-not is the stuff out of which our reformers are created. The Why-not follows the light that is within him, and rights the universe by means of its rays, never deviating from his course because of a curiosity to examine other persons' smoky little lamps. He marches straight to his mark because he never sees other people's toes in his path. He has the reformer's singleness of eye untroubled by the twofold vision of his natural enemy, the humorist. Obviously you can sweep away the dirt much better if you never see any golden motes in the dust heap. The Why-nots walk through life without moving out of the way of other people's angles, while the humorist relishes

Digitized by Google

as an adventure the sinuous course resulting from a constant avoidance of others' elbows, while preserving intact his own idiosyncrasies. Convention is a great protection of individuality. To follow all the external dictates of custom is a method of kicking a joyous dance through space while appearing to walk the circumspect street in the very latest shoes. This is a saying no Why-not will understand. Only those will understand who have lived it.

I do not know whether it is by accident or by necessity of temperament that there has never been an artist in my group of Why-nots. The artist's alternate exaltation and depression would be impossible to the Why-not's equable complacency. Self-centered, self-opinionated, the artist may be; but he must possess the conception of another person's point of view, even if it is merely the view of some creature of his own imagination. No Why-not ever had an imagination.

There are male Why-nots who have been great voyagers, and who tell long travel-tales of blood-curdling encounters and audacious achievements; but they tell them in a way to put one to sleep: for all the adventure in the world cannot make a Why-not anything but stodgy. The Why-nots may be adventurers by land or sea, but they are never adven-

Digitized by Google

turers in other people's souls; for in that strange land you must learn the language before you can go about safely, and a Why-not never speaks any language but his own.

With all my study I come no nearer to exact definition. The Why-nots elude each adjective I clap upon them. Call them unconventional, so are some of the most delicious people I know unconventional, and yet these retain a comradely consideration for other people's toes. After all what need of a definition? For if you are not a Why-not you will always recognize the species, and if you are a Why-not you will never know it.

Digitized by Google

STYLISH STOUTS

THE title is not my own; it is the comforting caption that advertises a dress sale, comforting because it perhaps indicates an epochal adjustment of fashion to fact. Is it possible that the stout woman, poor dear, has at last become stylish? May she at last be frankly fat, emancipated from frantic remodelings at the hands of *corsetière* and *couturière?* The burden of obesity is not in the carrying of its pounds, but in being forced to treat the obvious as if it were surreptitious. What dizzy elation for the fat woman to realize that henceforth she is suffered to be not only frank but fashionable! Dame Fashion is as fertile in the unexpected as Dame Fortune.

The fat woman has been so long accustomed to commiseration that it may be difficult for her to realize her new dignity; we have all pitied her, been sorry for the bursting glove-clasp, the exuberant girth, the sweets desired but denied, the chin whose apparent hauteur was so unjust to the kindly heart beneath it; and above all for that plump palm laid upon our arm with its accompanying tremulous whisper, "Am I as fat as she, or she, or she?"

Digitized by Google

But now all that evil time is forgotten. The anti-fat nostrum, the recipes for rolling, the panting mountain climb, all the many-doctored advice, all the beauty-parlor pummeling — all this is obsolete, for obesity has come into its own. The corpulent dame now has dresses made to exhibit, not to conceal, her shapeliness; these throng authentic fashion-sheets. She has her own clothes, not the adapted "line" of the lean and lovely sylph. The fat woman is no longer done out of her inheritance by a cruel and carping world. She has become a "stylish stout."

The "stout" is even entering story, not for farcical effect either. There is an increasing number of portly heroines in fiction. The male novelist still averts his eyes a little when he makes one. He leaves his outlines a bit vague, out of deference for past convention; for he knows he is an innovator. Fiction is always far in arrear of popular opinion, but there are a few romancers who are coming abreast of the times in portraiture. Alice of "Buried Alive" is a dumpy darling, and her charm is increased rather than diminished by the fact that she is fat. There is nothing neurasthenic about a well-padded person. The obese are always amiable. Older and wiser than we, the Oriental has incorporated this fact in his daily

Digitized by Google

philosophy. In the Orient stouts have always been stylish. Knowing that fat women are good to live with, the harem husband long ago persuaded both himself and the ladies that they are equally good to look at. The Westerner, on the contrary, is still at that callow stage of development when he tries to persuade himself that a woman, because she is good to look at, is also good to live with. Fortunate for the Occidental husband are our customs of liberty for ladies, permitting women whose nerves are but thinly clad with flesh to run freely about the streets, venting their irritability on the neighbors. Under Eastern seclusion a thin woman, closely confined, might keep the whole seraglio in a stew. It is for self-protection that Oriental convention cultivates an ideal of sleekness and opulence as the feminine standard.

It is a curious fact that in neither East nor West has the stylishness of stouts been extended to the male sex. The norm for man is to be long and limber. As the hero of romance, a man may be brawny; but except in farce, he may not yet be fat. In America this ideal of masculine slimness is explained by our fondness for thinking of our men as lean wrestlers with frontier conditions, for the fact of a frontier is still a pleasant figment of our fancy.

Digitized by Google

As a matter of brutal truth, both our men and our women have swelled perceptibly during a long period of plenty and of ease. Not all our Hooverizing has notably reduced the tendency of both sexes toward an opulent maturity. The pitiful point is that our men are not yet allowed by fashion to grow fat with dignity. Of course, it has never been so hard for a man to be voluminous as for a woman, because he thinks only of how uncomfortable he feels, and not, concomitantly, of how ungainly he looks. And yet the fat man has had pain enough in being the butt of the papers and of his pals; and from this anguish he cannot be relieved until fashion lifts its ban from his person as it has lifted it from that of the lady. No shop is as yet exhibiting styles for the stout man. He is still forced to squeeze himself into clothes designed for the stripling.

But the emancipation of men will follow that of women. Women are not so selfish that they will permit themselves to expand into efflorescence without seeking to obtain equal liberty for the fat man. No chivalrous woman will be content with her privilege of obesity without wanting men to share it. In due time the fat man, like the fat woman, will be made heroic in fiction and in fashion-plate. The day of the fat lady was long in dawning, but at

Digitized by Google

last her freedom and her fashionableness have arrived. Just as surely will a day come when tailors will announce to men patrons the happy era of stylish stouts.

Digitized by Google

THE FRIENDS OF OUR FRIENDS

ONE of the accepted disappointments that are the milestones of our adjustment to life is the lost hope of making our friends love each other. Honestly scrutinized, our wish to have two friends join hands in intimacy is not so clearly commendable that we are justified either in surprise or in sensitiveness when our efforts fail. One of two motives is usually discernible in urging two friends upon each other — either pride in exhibiting a possession or pride in exercising philanthropy. Some of us can never keep destiny's best gift, a friend, to ourselves; we believe that we have discovered a prize, we wish other people to applaud our discernment and to accept the treasure at our valuation.

Our other motive, the pride of philanthropy, is even more deceptive. We decide that Charles and James will be good for each other, and forthwith we presume to become the little tin god who shall introduce them. Complacently we occupy the pedestal of Providence. But who can prophesy that Charles and James will be good for each other? It is a matter for their Maker only.

Digitized by Google

THE FRIENDS OF OUR FRIENDS

It is necessary to have a clear comprehension of how friends are in the first place acquired before we can fully examine the methods and the motives for mixing them. For precision we may employ algebraic symbols: Let A represent the original person who has attracted to himself out of all the universe Old Friend B and Newer Friend C. A is not content to exchange heart hospitality with B and C separately; he must have them meet under the auspices of his introduction. Yet the infinite variety of reasons why B and C, D and E, and all the alphabet of friends down to Z, may be the friends of A are most unlikely to be the same reasons that should bind them to each other. A's introduction of each to each is coercion and no hearts' bond. Friendship is binding only as it is the fetter freely assumed by the free. It irks us if the chain is clamped by any third hand, however well loved.

How often have we all gone through the ordeal of our friend's introduction to his friend! How adroitly A elicits our best anecdote, exhibits some endearing prejudice, goads on our enfeebled conversation! A's unwarranted attempt to show off B and C is akin to the cruelty that sends our four-legged friends to a dog show. The blue ribbon is scant comfort to the unhappy kennel; it is merely a

Digitized by Google

prize for the owner's pride. One is not willing to be one's friend's pet poodle. Nor yet is one ready to be any man's parcel to be handed to another man to be opened without one's leave. To one's chosen friend one is willing to deliver one's self, his own package; but let him invite some one else to untie the strings, and, being human, one has all a parcel's emotions.

The matter is still more deserving of protest when the delicate manipulation of A's introduction suggests hidden reformatory intentions. By his gingerly shoving each upon each, we — B and C — perceive that he thinks we need each other's services, that he wishes us to organize a tiny society for mutual improvement. But in friendship we desire neither to better nor be bettered; we desire to enjoy ourselves.

As matter of theory, A's efforts to introduce his friends deserve never to succeed; but, as matter of fact, they do actually sometimes succeed completely, sometimes partly, as oftener they utterly fail. It is destructive to A's friendship with either to discover that B and C are more congenial with each other than either has ever been with him. It is as if on the day of introduction all three, A and B and C, were three atomic personalities sitting each on his point of a triangular acquaintance,

Digitized by Google

but from the day of introduction B and C tended to approach nearer and nearer, until at last A perceives them completely fused and together withdrawing utterly from him out into space. Of all the original triangle there is left only A sitting on his desolate little dot. He deserved the dot, but it's lonesome, as all of us know, for we have all at some time sat upon it.

Perhaps half success in making friends love each other is even more permanently awkward than complete success. Perhaps B and C make some insincere attempts at affection, wholly for A's sake, only to abandon these efforts later and to come sneaking back separately to his hospitality, making but airy reference or none at all to each other's existence. Yet when B's name is dropped, or C's, it means thenceforth a closed door in conversation, and when the essence of comradeship is the glad possession of the areas of another soul, then every locked gate is a loss.

But there is a still sadder issue possible for the effort to force one friend upon another. The feeling of B and C for each other may not be passive endurance, but enmity so intense as in the end to include even A. B may argue that your affection for so depraved a person as C reveals depravity in you, and C may

Digitized by Google

equally distrust you for your culpable fondness for B. You yourself may find it impossible to forgive either for the failure to appreciate the other. The end of the matter may be that each little atom shall go stamping off in his own direction, all three with each step growing more hopelessly sundered. Yet you, Friend A, deserve the fate of any man who would put fetters on friendship. Only by freedom of choice among atoms to combine with whom they will, can we feel our human dignity. To myself I am but a winking dust-mote, but to my friend a wandering star of his discovery. Let all friendship be free, for there is nothing so wind-tossed and weak as an atom that goes alone; there is nothing so lordly as two atoms, who, locking arms and prancing air, go forth to pass judgment on the universe together.

Digitized by Google

AN ARGUMENT FOR ABSENCE

PARTING is sometimes so sweet that one wonders why anybody should ever call it a sorrow. If the gentle mood and gentle manners incident to a departure might only become permanent, there would be no occasion to argue for absence as a means of mutual understanding. Our guardian angels, saddened by the bickerings of intimacy, have a way sometimes of flying off with us when we have failed to keep step with our housemates, failed sometimes out of sheer impatience, sometimes out of sheer inability to maintain their stride. The mere prospect of removal has a benign influence; we never quarrel with people who are going away to-morrow. Occasionally one wonders whether it might not be possible to adopt for use in association some of the advantages of absence.

It may be well to ascertain what these are, and why it is often easier to love people when we are away from them, or at least easier to be civil to them. One reason is a case of conscience. It is a good deal more instinctive to be one's brother's keeper than not to be, and it is equally instinctive for brother not to like

Digitized by Google

it, and to retaliate in kind. Mutual responsibility for daily conduct is a direct result of daily contact, and is a responsibility usually very vocally expressed. Relief from the duty of bringing up our intimates is the chief refreshment of going away from them, but is it not a relief that might conceivably be attained even when staying at home? Is it positively necessary to put a thousand miles between them before brethren can dwell together in unity? Yes, exactly such necessity is maintained by argument for absence. To understand, one must remember that the chief function of flesh is to conceal soul. The envelopes in which we are done up are often most misleading as to contents. The more we see of people, the more their bodies get in the way of clear comprehension. Little tricks of gesture weary our eyes; some habitual snore or snuffle, some reiterated expletive, teases our nerves, until the soul they obscure is hidden wholly by blundering body. All these small impacts are forgotten at a distance, and soul shines clear in our absent converse, and dominates inalienably the harmony of our return.

Not alone the intimacy that is wearing threadbare is best restored by periods of remoteness; the most harmonious association

Digitized by Google

needs sometimes the tonic of separation, by which two people, each setting forth alone, can make discoveries and win trophies to bring back for sharing. People should part for a bit when they find their footsteps too smoothly fitted each to each, for just here comes in the danger that their sinews lose adaptability. For fluent adjustment of mind and muscle we had better sometimes try association with people whose pace is provocative.

Friends everybody has with whom association must always mean a maximum of absence and a minimum of presence. We can't take them too steadily because we take them too headily. Keeping up with them must always make us glad but breathless. These are people over-subtle or over-stimulating. We have to run off by ourselves and ruminate their words and experiment with them by applying them to our lives, before we are ready to come back for more.

As one thinks about the efficacy of absence one pauses to ponder the nature of the hole left in the household by the withdrawal of a member. For those left behind the resulting sensation is either of space or of a vacuum, and neither effect can be predicted in advance. The very people whom one expects most to

Digitized by Google

miss sometimes leave behind them a sense of room, freedom, exhilaration. People one accounts negligible when they are at hand sometimes, by going away, create a vacancy to be filled only by their return. The truth is that personality is a matter of cubic feet. Persons, well loved, delightful, dominant, sometimes take up more room than anybody dreams. One expects to miss them intolerably, and instead one discovers that one's legs and arms and thoughts were all a little cramped, and it feels guiltily good to stretch them. There are, on the other hand, people quite different whose characters seem to make room rather than to take it. When they go away one is amazed to discover that it was in their presence one's imagination flew farthest, one's interests stretched widest, one's ideas delved deepest. One discovers that these quiet ones were for their associates space-producing people. The gift of a dominance that takes room from others without their knowing it, and the gift of a sympathy that gives room to others without their knowing it, prove alike that personality is calculable by the metric system. No house is big enough to hold many personalities at once; that is why the guardian angels advocate absence now and then, discreetly applied. They have a way, these gentle guard-

Digitized by Google

ian angels, of so training the feet of the sundered that when at last they lead us back, we are surprised at the ease with which we fall into the step of true comradeship.

Digitized by Google

ON BEING AND LETTING ALONE

ONE may readily divide one's friends into those who crave solitude and those who crave a crowd. Any given individual of these classes may not be able to get what he wants, but he is to be classified by his desire, as to whether he is always secretly wishing to be alone, or always secretly fearing to be. There are persons who sicken for solitude as a plant fades for light. They do not always know what is the matter with them, neither do their housemates; they are merely stifling for lack of stillness. It needs only an hour's, a day's, withdrawal to restore them to selfdom.

People who like to be alone favor different varieties of solitude: one of them may wish to be alone with sun or stars or shining hills; another may desire shut-in seclusion with a book; another longs for isolation with a piano or a palette; a few women who make a science of domesticity like to be left alone with their houses. Whatever it is with which any of these people desire to be secluded, it is always found to be something that has not a self. Out-of-doors, books, art, science, are enfranchising because they are spacious and impersonal;

Digitized by Google

they do not impede the spirit by any personal clamor or criticism, either suspected or spoken. A desire for solitude is a desire often adroitly concealed, but we can always recognize among our friends those who love to be alone, when we find ourselves jealous of the subtle self-sufficiency of their retirement, not always perceiving that there is nothing that will make their eyes light with such appreciative comradeship as being discreetly left alone.

In sharp contrast are the people who never want to be by themselves. For some reason they are often as garrulous as they are gregarious, while the solitary are always good listeners. The lovers of a crowd are reduced to tearful protest by a half-hour of "lonesomeness," while the lovers of loneliness seem least lonely when most alone. The others find the most sociable woodland lonesome unless gay hotel guests swarm through it. They would not recognize a meadow if they met it out walking alone. They would perhaps not recognize themselves if separated from a throng of others of the same kind. There is nothing they are so afraid of as of the spacious and impersonal; and yet, with all their preoccupation with the personal, they do not seem to achieve much personality.

Not all lovers of crowds, however, are shal-

Digitized by Google

low and silly. There are others, nobler, finer, the noblest and finest perhaps that one could discover. These are big, busy people to whom hurry and hubbub never bring any pressure of pain. They love a crowded existence because it means ministry. They never seem to tire of incessant demands upon their time and sympathy, but rather to thrive upon them. Unless the sick and sad and sorry throng their path, they cannot find their own way upon it. They are people with brains, brains bent always on the executive and immediate, not the kind of brains that require room to soar and dive and dig. Practical people these, unselfish, noble. Yet they are never people one could picture as alone with a mountain, a book, their own souls. They would endure such communion with fortitude, but not with pleasure.

By a curious anomaly those who flee solitude, and those who crave it, are not thereby to be classified as social and anti-social — lovers of their kind *versus* haters of it. The lovers of loneliness are often the warmest-hearted people in the world, and socially most gracious and considerate, taught by their own sensitiveness to contacts how to avoid bumping into the idiosyncrasies of their fellows. They so conscientiously support their ideal of sympathy that often those who most love soli-

Digitized by Google

tude are exactly those who would be least suspected of such a yearning. So gracefully does a hostess bend a listening ear to her guests that no one would dream that what she inwardly most desires is to be swinging at the heart of the farthest pine-tree, while a lonely moon rides overhead, and a lonely wind pipes at her ear. The group of the solitary-souled is often delightful in company, alluring by its very suggestion of retirement — of a humorous peering-forth at the world from recesses it vastly prefers.

On the contrary, the lovers of crowds are by no means always socially successful. The superficial class is often banal, or caustic and gossipy and vacuous in conversation. As for the other nobler ones, busy and philanthropic, they are not — not always — so very interesting, however admirable.

To be interesting one must have thoughts that wander up and down, to and fro. Such thoughts require space and silence and freedom from impact. People who love to be alone are always people who think. Thoughts are invisible, but possibly not imponderable; possibly they require room, room actual and material, where they can wheel and dart and discover. Thinkers, therefore, instinctively avoid a crowd — a crowd, that is, of people who

Digitized by Google

know the thinker familiarly, people whose conjectured attention and comment occasion that sense of repression precisely most opposed to the free flights of individuality. A crowd of strangers, on the other hand, absorbed, indifferent, often provides the most inspiring kind of solitude. Whether their seclusion be found indoors or out, in the silent study or noisy street, people who love to be alone will always be found to be people whose thoughts, flying far and free from touch or taint of other people, are building for them that spacious possession called a personality.

Digitized by Google

A SOLILOQUY ON SORTING

HAVE any of us forgotten those far-off springtimes when we, small eager people in pinafores or kilts, observed the adults of our household, as they hauled forth the winter's accumulation from the closets, and laboriously discarded, rearranged, retied, and returned it to the soapy-smelling shelves? In our memories the fragrance of soap mingles with the fragrance of violets, both connoting April. The call of spring is so subtly compounded of energy and enervation that it seems strange that it is always the energy that prevails, making April the date for housecleaning. Perhaps we share with Nature her instinct to clear away the winter's clutter, retaining only so much as may be needed in the new life of spring, throwing aside all that might impede the pushing of fresh blade and blossom. There is in us more of vegetable impulse than we recognize, and they are sadly desiccated mortals whose spirits do not burgeon immortally in every spring, and who do not, with the spirit's stirring, feel once more the need to sift and rearrange all the body's stored impedimenta, food supplies and furni-

Digitized by Google

ture, books and clothes, fripperies and fineries. How eagerly, when we were tiny, we used to watch for those riches of rubbish, discarded by our elders, with which we might ourselves begin to store and sort and stow away! Comic and crude our childish standard of selection and arrangement, to which each little budding personality held the clue. Industrious as baby beavers, we thrilled to our first sorting, instinctively aware that the classification of the treasures earth flings us is the sole enduring imprint the evanescent self can leave upon its surroundings.

The zest of life is in its successive sortings as we travel from decade to decade, from place to place, from faith to faith. Life is an endless battle against clutter. No sooner do we get through one job of assortment than some unobserved, mounting heap of something else challenges our sense of order and analysis. Most of us, at any given moment, are conscious of a pile of something somewhere in our lives that needs sorting — it may be a mass of old books or old boots, or merely old motives. There is hardly any peace of mind so deep as that one experiences just after one has satisfactorily sorted something. Yet always inexorably, insidiously, a fresh inchoate pile is mounting somewhere

Digitized by Google

on our spirit's premises, demanding arrangement.

True there are people who evade the burden by never pausing long enough on any experience to discover where it belongs in the soul's store of noble and less noble. Such people move from apartment to apartment, all ready furnished, all without closets, all too public to afford any privacy for personal hoards. But somehow those others are more interesting whose spirits have cubby-holes containing bags and boxes, quaintly labeled, perhaps, but inviting. These never outgrow the childish ardor for examining the trinkets others throw aside, as being perhaps for their own humbler selves significant. These long for room enough and leisure enough to overhaul life's fleeting opinions, its flashing visions, and arrange them into ordered piles, for useful application. Some of us yearn for an old-fashioned garret, such as our fathers possessed both in their heads and in their houses, where crowding conglomerate impressions may be safely stored until we have time to arrange them, and where, after such selection, we may keep our neatly ticketed solutions for handy reference. By means of garrets the wisdom of our ancestors was preserved, mellow with experience, rich with romance. Like a child

Digitized by Google

bent on adventure one might steal "up attic" and live for a while in one's grandfather's soul, all quick with life beneath the dust and cobwebs.

Perhaps those old garrets were musty, or perhaps, on the other hand, they held inviolate the aroma of tradition. Perhaps modern homes and modern heads, empty of storage-room, are more sanitary, or perhaps they are more barren, than those of our fathers, but certain it is that in this present there is small provision for storing or for sorting. We fight for mere breathing space as events, piling up too fast for all our efforts to appraise them, encroach from every corner upon our serenity. Shall we be utterly swamped while we struggle to formulate an ordered creed and conduct from out this chaos? Yet there is stimulus and sting in the effort to master whatever portion of contemporary clutter to-day invades even the humblest home. After a long winter of discontent social forces stir in some strange springtime of hope, and we must sift and sort and throw away all accumulation that would retard even the shyest blossom of aspiration, must retain whatever may give vitality to even the faintest blade of human progress. We must up, each one of us, and at

Digitized by Google

our spring sorting. The effect may leave us beaten and breathless, but better that than not to have tried to understand.

Perhaps life is meant to be merely a lesson in sorting. Perhaps we are set down before our variegated experiences as children are put to a task of selecting colored threads from a heap. The threads are as worthless as our transient opinions, but the color perception gained is an asset for all the child's life to come. Perhaps the pedagogical purpose that overwhelms us continually with new knowledge, new experience, new sensation, is to make our spirit's eyes sharp, our spirit's selection deft and sure, in order that we may recognize unerringly whatsoever things are lovely when we move hence to that new abode where is being stored all earth's evanescent loveliness for our eternal enjoyment. There are some who have conceived heaven as a supernal attic where we may forever delight in reviewing and revaluing all the garnered treasures of earth. He had but scant time for any mortal hoarding, that finely discriminating young poet who wrote:

"Still may time hold some golden space
Where I'll unpack that scented store
Of song and flower and sky and face,
And count and touch and turn them o'er,

Digitized by Google

Musing upon them; as a mother, who
Has watched her children all the rich day through,
Sits quiet-handed, in the fading light,
When children sleep, ere night."

There is homely wisdom in that phrase, "putting one's house in order" as euphemism of preparation for our final flitting. Putting our house in order means that we shall leave no clutter for others to sort; that for our successor our memory shall be an orderly place where he may enter and ponder our arrangement, that arrangement being the only enduring impress the human soul can make upon its transitory possessions. Perhaps we shall have traveled far from our babyhood's springtime when we watched the grown-ups sorting the winter's accumulation, our eagerness all a-tiptoe to secure some rubbish to dominate with our own ownership and arrangement. On some quiet day securely stored in the future, we shall be called to do our last sorting; however faint our hands and dull our eyes, we shall rally once more to springtime energy, overhaul our cramped closets, discard the unessential, pack away, neatly labeled, the piles that we deem of abiding value. Yet even on that last day, we shall not know securely whether our standards of selection are the true ones. Have we not so many

Digitized by Google

times thought we had discovered the final verities, only to recatalogue on another day, tossing past treasures on the trash-pile, or running to the ash-heap to reclaim some prize our earlier stupidity had repudiated? Yet we never lost the lifelong zest of rearrangement. Only those people outgrow the delight of sorting whose spirits have forgotten all April burgeoning. We know that even in our last spring sorting we shall be but fallible in our selection. Not even then shall we know what it were best to take with us. Mercifully, we need not decide, for the celestial escort, having gently blindfolded our eyes the more securely to lead us over, will look at our little piles with divine amusement at our crude baby valuations, and then will select, better than mortal wisdom could, those earthly treasures best fitted to keep a little child, in a strange new house, from being homesick.

Digitized by Google

DRUDGERY AS A FINE ART

IT has been my gracious luck to live for a little space of peace near to a woman who loves drudgery, tossed up to her from the nearly shipwreck of heavy sickness. I was sailing after storm in a wide still sea, on and on, up to an island with a high portal. The great gate swung ajar — and then, after all, they would not let me through. But I had looked within. Nor I nor Lazarus shall tell what we saw, but I have come back crippled with strangeness. Life seems to me shelterless. My friends seem strangely busy about curious small matters. The sun is unfamiliar and I have forgotten the language of the rain. Mystery cries to me in the wind beyond the window. I perceive sun and rain, wind and snow. I see the long blue aisles, bleak with infinitude, where the white stars are swung, but I cannot feel at home.

But as the gentle weeks flow by me here, do they perhaps bring healing? Still half in dream, I watch the ways of little things. I think there is no occupation in this home that is not touched and tricked into an art. Exalt dish-washing to the plane of ceremony and

Digitized by Google

see what happens. Even the initial movement merits the dignity of argument — whether it is better to scrape and stack in the dining-room or to transfer the clutter to the kitchen table before arrangement. The first method has the advantage of more immediate conciseness, but the latter prevents the flirting of gravy or egg on the table linen, with all the resultant upheaval in the napery sequence of the week.

There is health and healing in dish-washing when it moves to a cheery little ritual all its own. Let the kitchen table be covered with oilcloth white as milk and satiny as a mirror. Arrange all first with symmetry — plates in a pyramid in which no several platter shall be out of plumb in the mounting structure, and match the silver, teaspoon to teaspoon, fork to fork, thus both before and after washing. Put all the little pitchers in a company, and the glasses, and the cups. Have all dishes scraped and rinsed to the uttermost before the final rite of baptism, then leave them thus, for in the ethics of dish-washing the law is pans first. There is deep wisdom in attacking griddle and frying-pan with your first soapsuds and your freshest energy, and keeping the tempting glassware and silver as the dessert of your efforts.

Digitized by Google

After the sturdy stress of cleansing the cook-pans, the mere dishes are a more easeful encounter. Gently my friend washes and wipes, polishes, and puts away cup and glass, pot and kettle; for are they not all her comrades, genial with service? Perhaps she is not overswift, this kitchen poet amid her soapsuds. I surmise an objection, staccato-sharp: Why should she linger over dish-washing? Why does n't she get done? I fear the objector is some terrifying feminist, too logical for argument, whereas the housewife I picture is merely a woman looking sharp to see what is the ultimately worth while. That god Get-Done is a terrible slave-driver. Why do you wish to get done, except to do nothing or to do something else? But why nothing? And the something else — are you quite sure it makes you or any one a whit happier than it does to make a cheerful suds of your dish-water and sing a song of joy to it?

My friend might be a bed-maker to a king. There is no day when the deepest secrets of mattresses and springs are not laid bare to air and sun. Pads and pillows can never grow lumpy when so deftly kneaded, nor sheets so tight-drawn crumple. The final result is a big white cake with pillows and bolster as embossments of frosting. But never

Digitized by Google

tell her the bed is too beautiful to lie upon if you do not wish to merit her scorn. Here is not a home, she would have you know, where a bed is better than its occupant; if her beds are daintily dealt with, it is to make them the gentler to feet that are tired and backs that are cricked. In her house things have not the mastery; it is as ministers that she loves them. She may delight in mending, but if her needle weaves a fairy pattern on your stocking toe kindly remember that it is to make your steps the smoother. All things that hands can do she loves. I do not suppose that she would deliberately punch you in order afterwards to poultice, but if an icy pavement should rise up and batter you down she would take as deep comfort as you in her liniments and her rubbing; and if you should come to her snuffling and a-fevered she would have a masterful delight in drubbing all germs out of your system.

Of all home-making arts, surely cooking should be the most enjoyable, and with my friend it is. Cooking affords such scope for invention, imagination, creation — in a word, for personality. A cook and her material are in direct and stimulating relation. You can imagine nothing more a revelation of personality than mashed potato, passing, as it may,

Digitized by Google

all the way from a sodden indigestibility, gray and chill and salty, to a creamy fluff of succulence upon the palate. My friend casts herself into her cook-pot in an abandon of creation, and miracles result. Your tomato hardly recognizes himself for a mere vegetable, so delicately is he transformed into jelly and scallop and chutney. Her biscuits respond to her watching as if they were blossoms that must expand. Her omelets, méringues, soufflés, are light as foam. Her marmalades have an amber beauty; and they should have, for has she not listened for the ripe gurgle from that syrupy mass a-boil as alertly as if it were the murmur from a cradle? It is in the study of flavoring that she chiefly excels. She is one who weighs the value of a hint, one of the rare women who may be trusted with garlic. In her house I pity those stupid people who keep a kitchen door shut, not recognizing a kitchen as a magician's workshop. What nose would shut a door on mustard pickle and currant gingerbread?

In this kitchen I garner many a household hint tossed to me as my friend brews or bakes, scours or sews. Nothing goes to waste from her soup-kettle or bread-box or work-basket. I watch her make a glory of cleaning the refrigerator, I observe all the useful devices she

Digitized by Google

can compass with a clothespin, and I wonder which she more enjoys routing, the great devil Dirt or the great devil Waste. She has minutest methods of saving money, saving mess. I do not think she has one for saving time. To take more thought how you shall spend your time than how you shall save it implies a different sense of values in her science of home-making; this is a home without hurry.

Here I am learning the loveliness of littleness. Such small things delight this housewife! A glass of currant jelly in the window; the god Sun deigns to look through it, and it's a great globed jewel. A tulip bed shaped by angel fingers to be a pulsing flame; seen from the kitchen doorstep it is a thing to make her clap her hands. The lid lifted from the kitchen range on some cloud-banked morning reveals such palpitant fire-sprites as quicken one's breath with wonder. Jelly and tulips and kitchen fire are mysteries turned tame and tender in her eyes, mysteries that help to make a home, and do not frighten. My friend's hands, busy with many devices seeming small, are they not achieving a shelter and a sanctuary in the midst of the engulfing strangeness of this big universe? I half guess she is manipulating me as deftly as if I

Digitized by Google

were bread or blossom. I sip peace in her presence, and am as trustful in her hands as if I were a biscuit or a begonia.

Setting me briskly to polishing her teaspoons, has she perhaps succeeded in polishing a forgotten twinkle into my eyes? Gazing through her sunny window-panes, I no longer see a world hostile with mystery. Look, is n't a friendly universe cheerily making a home for me, so that I may be cleaned and fed and warmed by the best sanitary methods? See the busy brown fingers of the rain all sudsy with scouring out the gutters, and in the winter watch the tossing white brooms of the snow dusting off the air, and then in spring's big kitchen look at the sun, Phœbus Apollo in a chef's cap, doing my cherries to just the right turn. Rain, snow, and sun, doing the world's drudgery with the same high zest as that with which my friend does it, and with the same high purpose of welcome to the stranger, she and they have restored me from sickness; at last I feel at home.

Digitized by Google

THE PERILS OF TELEPATHY

THE present period is marked by an increasing distrust of science. We are waking up to the fact that some of the fairest provinces of uncertainty are threatened by the invasion of accurate knowledge. The encroachments of scientific exactness upon guesswork are so insidious, that unless we strengthen our defenses in time, we may lose some of our trustiest strongholds. We have been used to view one spot as well-nigh impregnable to clear understanding, and that spot is our own self. For a good many æons we have lived along comfortably, each in a sturdy tower, divining each other's interior only by fallible peepholes, and communicating, when we care to communicate, by means of safe little subterfuges called words. We have been reasonably secure from approach by earth, air, or sea. The whole fabric of society is built on the assumption that we can never get at each other, never really know what our next-door neighbor is up to.

It is about time that some one noticed that science is plotting a descent upon this pleasant privacy. If we flatter ourselves that we are

Digitized by Google

going to be allowed to think our own thoughts in isolation, it is high time that we listened to some of the threatening voices that go unheeded. I quote one such, which advocates introducing to this mortal scene the chief inconvenience incident to post-mundane existence.

"One could communicate with extraordinary swiftness and ease by imagination alone. Talk soul to soul, as it were. It is a simple trick and can be practiced between human beings while on earth, and is indeed the best form of conversation."

Do we actually fail to perceive the audacity of the menace implied? The mere indecorousness of naked sincerity is the least of the evils that telepathy will let loose upon us. Courtesy could not exist in a world where people perfectly understood each other. Our manners are none too good as it is, but how the beast and the boor in all of us would break forth if never controlled by the effort to appear more polite than we feel! If the thoughts, for example, of guest and host were utterly undressed, the one before the other, how long would the gentle amenities of hospitality survive? Who would have the courage to go to a dinner if he had to endure the clatter of people's thoughts about him pound-

Digitized by Google

ing their way into his brain? Yet in the passage just quoted telepathy is actually advocated as a practice to be encouraged! Fortunately most of us are still so clumsy at it that we are not ready to forego the use of the tongue when we wish to speak; yet at times we are so shortsighted as to deprecate the use of words. Let us, rather, cheerfully continue not to understand each other, mindful how much worse off we should be if we *did* understand.

Although telepathy has not yet come into popular social usage, we occasionally meet people not ashamed to exhibit it as an accomplishment. Such people are most discouraging to conversation. When a person knows what we are going to say before we say it, the effort of expression seems futile; the racy epithet, the felicitous phrase go unspoken. There would presently be no *bons-mots* to be quoted; life would not be enlivened by the twinkling passage of repartee, that light rebound of thought and word, striking against surfaces they cannot pierce. When there are no walls for talk to knock against, and no gates to be opened or shut to other people's penetration, the art of conversation will die, and social intercourse be reduced to a fatuous smirking at each other's faces — or

Digitized by Google

perhaps to a fierce clawing of them, when the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed.

The universal employment of telepathic communication would do away with another prerogative of society, the right to gossip. In our present imperfect means of knowledge, everybody presents a different aspect to everybody else. To gossip is to bring forward for discussion all the data each observer has gathered; it is a comparison of various angles of misunderstanding tending to diffuse unenlightenment and thus to protect the person under examination from an intrusively accurate analysis. Now, if his soul were presented in the same crystalline fidelity to each of us, he himself would neither enjoy privacy of spirit, nor we our game of guessing.

If telepathy were once established as being what its advocates claim, "the best form of conversation," several established arts, several enjoyable diversions, would fall into immediate desuetude. Novels and plays would cease to be written. Romance and drama are constructed on the assumption that we can never really know one another's thoughts, combined with the illusion that we *can* if we try. We go to the play, we go to the book, because we delight to observe the infinite permutations and combinations of impact arising

Digitized by Google

from the truth that people cannot read each other's purposes. If the puppets on the stage — the playhouse stage and the world stage equally — all knew each other's intentions, there would immediately result, for the actors, the paralysis of the plot, and for the audience, all the boredom of omniscience. It is because none of us can tell where other people want to go that we bump into them. Telepathy would introduce the possibility of precaution and thus deprive life of its chief stimulus, unforeseen contact. What we enjoy in a novel is seeing how the author is going to steer his characters to their goal when they are continually being shoved away from it by collisions. In a wretched Utopia, where everybody understood everybody else, there would be no fun in either reading or writing, and literature would languish and disappear.

What keeps life going is that it keeps us guessing. Our pet vanity is our power to divine character. Human idiosyncrasies are a mystery forever alluring and forever eluding. Now telepathy proposes to come in and reform all this, proposes to teach us how to read souls as easily as spelling-books. Science has the effrontery to present the innovation as ushering in a millennium. I have no desire to go marching into a privacy that bewitches

Digitized by Google

me with invitation so long as I merely peep. Suppose I should find only dust and emptiness in rooms now magic with surmise!

I have shown how a system of telepathic communication would disrupt our social life and destroy the literature constructed to reflect that life. There are, however, two darker and deeper dangers incident to letting everybody use the aerial apparatus. If the introduction of telepathy would undermine social intercourse, it would absolutely annul solitude. The wings of the dove could never outdistance the impudent wings of the wireless. Anybody who wished could send his thoughts forth to investigate anybody else's nest in the wilderness. Privacy would rapidly become a prehistoric privilege. Solitude is the chief support of the affections: it would be impossible to love your fellow man if you knew you could never get away from him.

Last and most painful peril of all: it is not only my own and my neighbor's retirement that I would preserve impenetrable to mutual invasion: but there are other regions I do not wish to enter with any clear certainty, the skyward chambers of my own high tower of secrecy, where I sometimes entertain a mysterious visitor. If telepathy taught me the language of the spirit, I might inadvert-

Digitized by Google

ently learn to understand my own. Let not science be so sacrilegious. When I loaf and invite my own soul, I want the guest to come to me without any telepathic eavesdropping on the part of other people, and without any profaning analysis on my own part. Let no telepathy interrupt my communing with that august presence, my own soul.

Digitized by Google

FAMILY PHRASES

ALL lucky families own, cherished on some hidden closet shelf, a patchwork quilt. It is a homely possession, but a warm one. The old coverlid is never in constant use, but without it the catalogue of the household bedding would be incomplete; it is a reference quilt, as it were. It is brought forth only when more common and purchasable coverings are insufficient against the creeping cold and gusty draught pressing into firelit rooms from the bleak night beyond the home windows. Then one draws the old comfortable cozily about one's shoulders, its touch as trustworthy as that of fond hands familiar to one's childhood. A patchwork quilt is sacred to the family. We provide the guest-bed with such paddings against chill as may be had at any department store; yet if a guest is near and dear enough we may sometimes show him our family quilt.

The appearance of the familiar patchwork is always occasion for reminiscence. Its colors grow brighter with age in contrast with the more perishable shades of the present, for the dyes are often of home manufacture, trans-

Digitized by Google

mitted in formulæ not to be duplicated in any market.

The fun of the time-worn coverlid is in the suggestion inherent in each garnered scrap. Every bit of cloth evolves some chapter of family chronicle, each is a snip from some member's biography as expressed in the clothes he wore. Some few pieces were cut from the garments of our ancestors, enduring in tints as vivid as were the characters of the grandfathers and grandmothers who possessed those gay costumes of the long ago. Scraps of their debonair satins and brocades still star our pieced mosaic, bits of their homespun save it from flimsiness. Again some inch or two of flowered fabric may reproduce not only character, but circumstance, the exact sensations belonging to Belle's eighth birthday; or a morsel of check may recall the roaring farce of Ben's first long trousers. A patchwork quilt is a domestic record where we can always read history that would otherwise slip away; the dove gray of the grandmother's bridal gown, the shimmering amethyst of Mary's first *décolleté*, the sturdy blue of Tom's baby kilts — all these scraps restore to us the selves we had forgotten.

An actual patchwork quilt in its cozy homeliness is closely comparable to another pos-

Digitized by Google

session to be found on the treasure shelves of every family with fun enough in its make-up to manufacture its own protection against life's wild weather. Every such family has its medley of phrases, richly colored and significant to the family ear, a patterned fabric always ready for family reference, and sometimes exhibited to friendship's discernment. Each true home has through its long years of association evolved its own design for combining its variegated personalities into a warm and whimsical barrier against a cold world beyond the windows. As the flashing scarlet or brave green of some snip of cloth can evoke all a forgotten costume, so in the patterned patchwork of a family's individuality will certain treasured remarks flash forth the whole character of some member, or reproduce some delicious incident of our archives. We grow unfailingly merry when we review our motley web of family phrases. Gladly we share their subtleties with any guest who is close enough to understand, or, not infrequently, borrow some striking quip from his store, as in the good old patchwork days neighborly families used to dip into each other's piece-bags.

Perhaps it is in a country rectory that a patchwork quilt has an especial value. In a

Digitized by Google

household frankly vowed to poverty there can be little recourse to the luxury of custom-made paddings against fate. Furthermore, we of a country rectory must keep our patch-work quilt in such constant use that we can never forget the peculiar pattern of our family coziness, and also we must stitch our cheer so firmly that both its color and its warmth shall endure against the wear and tear of itinerancy. If I point out a few significant patches in one such family quilt, if to a friendly ear I explain the connotation of some salient phrases, it should be remembered that the dyes of our humor are of a formula common in ministerial homes.

I was some eight years old when I became familiar with a saying continually heard on the paternal lips. It was an expression that would be characterized by Latin grammars as a "condition contrary to fact," for the rector prefaced and concluded every dream of serviceability with seven words of iterated longing, "If I were a bag of beans!" Lest such a metamorphosis might appear a bizarre requisite for a minister of God, let me explain that the meaning can best be apprehended if the reader will pinch his nostrils tightly and then try to say, "If I were a man of means," for it was in this more intelligible form that

Digitized by Google

my father's yearning was originally expressed. A severe cold in the head one day occasioned the accidental change of the consonants. That my father ever afterwards voluntarily adopted the alteration was characteristic of one capable of whimsical appreciation of his own wistfulness. Yet with what sincerity of impotent desire he would cry, "If I were a bag of beans!" "If I were a bag of beans!" — and then would follow the outline of some vision for his parish, some plan for its advancement, so Utopian as to leave his practical family aghast with unbreathed gratitude that he was not "a bag of beans!" With what kindly coercion of philanthropy he would have enforced righteousness upon his flock! Consecrated himself to penury, he still, like many another clergyman, believed that money might have mended sinful hearts if only he could have employed it in the holy wizardry of devotion. It is a common enough mistake to believe that, if only we had the material means, we could somehow force people to be good by some other method than that sole permitted one of example. The rector never became a man of means, he never realized his dreams of benefaction. That which he did accomplish he never knew. If to-day sometimes he watches with the old imperishable

Digitized by Google

twinkle from some far place where the stars, too, twinkle with imperishable tenderness, does he see at last what deep harm he might have wrought where most he yearned to help, if he had ever been allowed to have his wish for riches? "If I were a bag of beans"; through some strange fusion of laughter and tears, that phrase gleams in the family vocabulary, as holy and as vivid as a tiny piece cut from a high priest's robe. Is it permitted at last to one who thought his life futile to perceive that it is perhaps because his soul was never exposed to that money-mastery over his fellows which is the subtle temptation of the philanthropist, that to-day, for all permitted to have been his people, his memory shines unsullied as some richly illumined window on which is designed the figure of the Great Poor Man, his closest Friend?

Out from childhood's far past there gazes the earnest little face of one who is her father's daughter. Benefaction was from the first as instinctive with her as with him. It was at the early age of five that she enriched our phrase collection with a sentence suggestive of one of the little ironies of philanthropic impulse. One penny was the amount allowed us for the purchase of candy, the meticulous sharing of which with each other was a primary moral

Digitized by Google

law. Now for one cent you could buy four large and succulent chocolate drops, one for mother, one for sister, one for brother, one for self. The father was strangely impervious to sweets, and besides he dwelt always in a mysteriously sacred room called The Study, into which our frivolous family life dared not penetrate except when the youngest, bold in baby prerogatives, pressed bravely in to demand a kiss. One day this youngest, a little Lady Bountiful with a penny in her palm, set forth, to return laden down with four precious bonbons. Duly she distributed, one, two, three, but held on to her own portion, while reflectively watching the consumption of the others. How much better her chocolate drop would taste to her own tongue, she was thinking, if she offered it first to her father in his incarceration. Generous impulse bore her into The Study, only to emerge in a moment, the most crestfallen of curly-heads, with eyes in which her father's own twinkle struggled against tears, and lips that hesitated between a laugh and a sob, as she tragically announced, "But he put it in his mouth, and ate it all up!" The mere fact that when the mother's account broke in abruptly upon the rector's absorption, he instantly interrupted his sermon to escort a dancing sprite to the candy

Digitized by Google

emporium, whence she returned with a whole wanton pound of chocolates, is neither here nor there; that conclusion of the episode has nothing to do with the meaning we have ever since attached to the words, "He put it in his mouth, and ate it all up!" — for it is significant, is it not, of much proffered generosity? There is a glow in offering what we are confident will not be taken, and when perchance our gift is gulped down contrary to our expectations, we do not all accept our just deserts with the gallant humor with which my small sister took her discomfiture. I know a charming woman who confesses to a peculiar form of self-indulgence, to a species of philanthropy in which she frankly enjoys her cake and eats it, too. Periodically she makes her will, giving generously to this and that poor relation, to this and that good cause. She spends many a happy hour in contemplation of the merry document; then she folds it up, and returns briskly to the business of her days — for she is in her prime, enjoying the best of life and of riches, neither of which she would sacrifice except in imagination. My friend, you observe, is cautious with her chocolate drop, but the rest of us are not all, or not always, so canny as she in protecting ourselves against our own kindly instincts.

Digitized by Google

How many times we press invitations, we offer services, we hold out gifts which we never expect to materialize, but which warm our own hearts curiously! The best that we can ask for is to be good sports when, haply, he *does* "put it in his mouth, and eat it all up."

To the patchwork of our phrase-quilt the same sister has contributed another scrap, equally revelatory of the little girl she used to be. On certain days, to us full of desolate bewilderment, the mother's door would be tight shut while she struggled with tonsillitis. Then a small watcher would crouch upon the sill, across which she once slipped a tiny note in loving and laborious print. "Dear Mamma," it read, "I am sorry you are sick. I wish everybody was always well." It is a little patch of tender blue, that childish wish, and one that each of us must many a time echo in the same impotent sympathy. What sudden simplification of world sorrows, which we watch in puzzled distress, if only "everybody was always well!"

Snips from another child character blend with the sister's. The brother was, however, a small person more chary of his idealism. From his infant years he faced the facts of human handicap and the realities of circumstance with a clear-sighted detachment, as is

Digitized by Google

proved by his early acceptance of the relation between bricks and straw. Every human being at some time in his history is exposed to the temptations of poultry-raising. My brother's attack came when he was twelve, and he has been immune ever since. His earliest obstacle was the lack of a chicken-pen. My mother met his difficulty with frank opprobrium — "If you had any gumption you'd *make* a chicken-pen!" The youngster gazed at her with the same withering glance a bold Hebrew might have employed toward an Egyptian overseer. "Gumption!" he exclaimed. "It's not gumption I need, it's boards!"

Another characteristic protest dates from my brother's much earlier years. To him books — real books, the Britannica, Macaulay's History, Webster's Unabridged — were a kingdom reluctantly relinquished for the pettiness of primers, and his royal intimacy with Arthur and Charlemagne was distinctly superior to the promiscuity of the unwashed primary school. Rural needs crowded a dozen small boys on a bench at a recitation. A harried teacher rebuked my brother for appropriating too much seat-room. He faced his accuser with calm honesty, announcing, "I prefer to leave a little space between."

Digitized by Google

Often enough that statement of preferences occurs to our minds and to our lips as we shiver involuntarily before the morning's headlines, for it is explanatory of much that threatens our security to-day. Strange seatmates shove upon us, and look darkly on our shrinking. In the public school of democracy we are still only in the primary room. During five tragic years we have read many a portent for ourselves in our efforts to maintain that "little space between." Like many another gentleman and scholar my brother has lately learned the profound lesson of soldier contact in a great and selfless cause. They have come back, our men, we know, careless of many old conventions, careful of many new convictions, not least of these, perhaps, since they have seen close by the courage and the beauty of men they once scorned as humble, that it will be their own loss if ever again they "prefer to leave a little space between."

Among our varied phrases there are bits of a forgotten past, still bright with the personality of the ancestor that first gave them utterance. Some of these bits date back to an alien economic era. To a visitor who hears our not infrequent rebuke to some grasping impulse — "John, John, thee's had thy egg" — is due its origin. There was once a Quaker

Digitized by Google

grandsire who was, in his so different day, a steel magnate; that is, he was a master-maker of scythes. He had his apprentice, who shared the family table, but not, as he was made to understand, all its privileges. The grandfather was rich in fertile acres and in the fame of his scythes, and food was abundant, so that members of the household might indulge not alone in one egg, but in two, or even more — at least so runs the now unbelievable legend of their plenty. It was not strange that the young prentice, seated there among the rest, should once have put forth his hand to take a second helping, only to be barred by the master's weighted words — "John, John, thee's had thy egg!" What strange reversal of position between our time and that distant decade when Capital and Labor still ate from the same dish, however disparate their allotted portions. To-day it is from outside the window that Labor thrusts in a grim hand, sternly rebuking the master-magnates with *its* "John, John, thee's had thy egg!"

Patches have enriched our family quilt from other sources than mere kinship. On sundry occasions vigorous souls have shared our domicile and have contributed lasting impressions to the pattern of our domesticity.

Digitized by Google

Ebony Sarah was one of these. Cooks are often natural philosophers, especially black ones, but few cooks expend more reflection upon the cosmos than did Sarah. Unable as she was either to read or write, her words were worthy of attention. As good Anglicans, we are, of course, shy of any personal allusion to the Deity as somehow unseemly, but Sarah, as a sturdy African Methodist, has no such compunction. God is none too haughty a personage to frequent her kitchen and her conversation. Sarah's religion is akin to that of the solon who lately abashed the Senate chamber by announcing that he did not "favor saddling the Almighty with all the sins of man." Various bits of Sarah's philosophy had from time to time arrested the smooth course of our more conventional creed and practice when one day she was inspired to cram the very pith of her theology into a single sentence. The subject was the War, at that stage when we were still trying to explain it. "I'm not one," said Sarah, "that blames God for this war. It's not his fault, it's folks's"; and then abruptly she achieved genius — "Poor God gets everything blamed on Him!"

To review the borrowed phrases which help to compose the motley of our household

Digitized by Google

patchwork would be perhaps to plagiarize. To each family its own phrases and the design into which they are stitched, but our own worn coverlid would lose some of its color if I did not point to a bright scrap recently added. Not many years ago a tiny fairy girl was blown into a friend's window from out the peopled Nowhere. Her merest prattle is pure poetry, her eyes are a sea-sprite's, and the little sandaled feet of her keep the tune of an elfin song. Her beauty dances, glances, through our dull rooms and ageing hearts. Life for her shall never stale to prose, for she has already vowed herself to beauty in explicit words comprising a tiny bit of cloth of gold among our more somber pieces. Of course, since she is earth-born, people must teach her hands little tasks. They set her once to place the plates and spoons, but there ensued silence in the dining-room.

"Are you setting the table?" called her mother's voice.

"I am going to," the sprite replied, "but I must make something pretty first."

Perhaps for our own delight we may afford always to let her "make something pretty first," seeing that possibly the angels, when commanded to manufacture yet another prose-paced human being, were beguiled to

Digitized by Google

evolve the gold hair and golden grace of her, pleading with the Master-Creator that they "must make something pretty first."

There is many another scrap that might be pointed out in our family patchwork, but even this brief exhibit may serve the purpose of making others draw forth and examine their own precious coverlid, for, however deeply concealed from their conscious appreciation, most families possess a family quilt. A patterned family life may perhaps appear to have become obsolete, but on the hidden heirloom shelves is it not always to be found in any chill emergency? When the night turns suddenly sharp, we do not send to a neighbor's to borrow his type of warmth nor do we call upon a department store for any ready-made comfort — we go to the treasure closet, and bring out once again our dependable old coverlid, merry with blended personalities, warm with stored affection. The whimsicalities of our garnered family phrases are symbols clipped from indestructible fabrics. The fused colors, the persistent pattern, the cozy, enduring padding make a warm protection against fate which is something to thank God for, that same God, Who, far from being praised for the priceless commonplace, too often "gets everything blamed on Him."

Digitized by Google

HOLD IZZY!

MOST households have their private dictionary of terms rich in connotation for the family ear, but needing explanation to outsiders. The full flavor of such a term comes partly from the dramatic pungency of the circumstance that christened it, and partly from the symbolism with which the expression may be ever afterwards employed to enliven and illuminate similar incidents. I know a home where the words "Hold Izzy" mean much when used to characterize some sudden responsibility. Explanation is appreciatively delivered by the lady of the house, a woman as graphic in narrating experience as she is intrepid in meeting it. An over-hurried morning once demanded her matching some silk at a village emporium personally conducted by its owner, a gentleman of Jewish extraction. It was the custom, when business called him from the counter, that his wife should slip in from the rear quarters to take his place; correspondingly, when her affairs took her away, the husband became her kitchen or nursery substitute. It was on one of these latter occasions that my

Digitized by Google

friend entered with her breathless demand. Shirt-sleeved and puffing a fat cigar, the proprietor gazed back at her across the counter, eager, obsequious, but helpless, for he carried in his arms his infant son, a large and lusty babe, too old not to roll if put down, too young to sit up. Utterly unconscious of obstructing trade, the child lay in his father's embrace, fat, unblinking, and engrossed in sucking his thumb, oblivious alike to his father's difficulty and the customer's inconvenience. The devoted parent cast despairing eyes at shelf and counter and floor, but saw no secure resting-place for his burden. The moment was urgent, imperative; the father bent impulsively forward, beaming relief: "Hold Izzy!" he said.

In recounting her sensations of the next twenty minutes, my friend is always peculiarly analytic and circumstantial. Surprise was her first emotion — one moment bowling along in her motor, unaware there was an "Izzy" in the world, the next moment called upon to be the sole depository for an armful of Hebrew baby, her entire mind, her entire muscle taut with the task of not spilling him! She notes particularly the instant absorption required of her to meet a responsibility totally alien to her training, her immediate circum-

Digitized by Google

stances, her volition, but unescapable. She recalls dreamily and distractedly striving to match silks across the redundant and indifferent form of Izzy, and trancedly trying to attend to the duty for which she had entered the store, as being still necessary in spite of the duty for which she had not entered it, by mere instinct thus endeavoring to keep to the course of her own existence, though so abruptly entangled in Izzy's.

She remembers also her boundless sympathy for Izzy's father, her sense of his utter impotence supposing she had *not* held Izzy, her responsive thrill to the faith with which, although he had never before laid eyes on her, he leaned over the counter and deposited in her automatically extended arms, his son and heir. She is too penetrating to take unction to herself for his confidence, she knows that there are moments when the most cynical of us are forced to trust others. Lastly she recalls most vividly the serenity of Izzy himself, impenetrable to any consciousness of being an inconvenience, his exquisite self-absorption, his lofty unconcern as to who held him, so long as he was held, matching his faith that all his life he would be tended, while all he had to do was to lie and suck his thumb.

We have all of us at some time held some-

Digitized by Google

body's Izzy, we have all of us at some time had to have our Izzy held. The Izzy relation between any two people is an instance of the purely involuntary bearing of another's burden, or the equally involuntary dumping of our own. Five minutes before the occurrence we could not have prophesied either predicament, but there we are! We can all of us cite illustration from experience. The essence of an Izzy emergency is not its seriousness, but its intensity. As a humble instance, one is bound, say, on an errand only less momentous than life and death, which requires one's reaching the end of the trolley line in half an hour. Suddenly one discovers one's purse left at home! With what mendicant sharpness one studies the faces of one's fellow passengers! Yet it rarely happens that there is not some one to spring instant to meet a stranger's exigency signified by the small but supreme need of a nickel.

Holding Izzy is an experience often more enjoyed in the telling than at the time. It is likely to be too engrossing for humor, but few of us would be cheated of the mirth that shines on it in retrospect. Travel is particularly fruitful in Izzy incidents. For example, behold ourself seated in our chair, the light from the car window falling just right upon

Digitized by Google

our novel, the footstool fixed to our liking, when in hurtles a breathless friend, gasping good-byes to a guest instantly pressed upon us to care for and comfort through all the long hours between departure and destination. Perhaps the stranger is a fidgety old lady continually popping forth frantic inquiries at the scurrying porter. Perhaps it is a garrulous old gentleman who genially thunders confidences in our unwilling ears, while neighboring chairs twinkle behind newspapers. A moment before, we were free as the wind on its wanderings; forthwith we are introduced to unheard-of intricacies of baggage for our polite disentangling, and must be prepared for all manner of emergency upon arrival, in the event of impossible connections, and expected relatives who fail to appear with their welcome. The problems of the chance acquaintance entrusted to our attention on a journey present a perplexity I have never known to befall any other class of travelers.

Holding Izzy is often as complicated for the holder as it is simple for Izzy himself. Of course, according to strict definition and explanation, Izzy is not necessarily a person; only, according to the nature of humanity, Izzy is often very personal indeed. There are men and women created to be Izzies all their

Digitized by Google

lives, and never to guess it. People hand them back and forth across the counter of social commerce, because they could not get anything done themselves if they did not thus take turns in holding Izzy. Other persons may be harried by Izzy's problems; Izzy himself sucks his thumb, blindly, beautifully, unaware. Somebody always has taken care of him, somebody always will take care of him. He is created to call forth philanthropy in others, himself fatly cushioned in complacence. He does not know enough of what goes on about him to be either critical or grateful. He is merely himself, Izzy.

Some people are foreordained to hold Izzy. Some people are foreordained to have their Izzy held. I have held Izzy, I have had my Izzy held for me: but, I am wondering: Have I ever been Izzy myself?

Digitized by Google

ON ADOPTING ONE'S PARENTS

IT is strange how persistently one is dogged and tracked down by one's dreams. A dream is the toughest of living things. I myself have been hounded through life by an ideal. As an infant I burned with a spirit of adoption, expansive, indiscriminate, impersonal; while I was still of years to be myself coddled and kissed, curled, cribbed, scoured, and spanked, I imaged myself the mother of an orphan asylum. Still uncertain in speech, I lisped lullabies to armfuls of babies, of every size, sex, and condition. The babies were delivered at my door by packet, singly and by the dozen, in all degrees of filth, abuse, and emaciation. Vigorously I tubbed them, fed them, bedded them, patted them, or paddywhacked them, just as my maternal conscience demanded. Oh, it was a brave institution, that orphan asylum of mine; it solaced my waking hours, and at night I fell asleep sucking the thumb of philanthropy.

The orphan asylum lasted into my teens, and then it contracted, restricted itself in the sex and number to be admitted; but the spirit of things was much the same; for he was to be

Digitized by Google

lonely and abused, world-worn and weary, and twenty-nine or thirty, perhaps. Gladly would he seek refuge for his battered head on the wise and wifely bosom of sixteen. But he did n't. The brisk little years came trudging along, and they carried him and my sixteenth birthday far and far away, but still the world, for all of me, was unadopted. Then the orphan asylum came sneaking back again, but this time it was only one — one baby. Why could not I, I asked myself, when the days of my spinsterhood should be grown less busy, pick up a bit of a boy- or girl-thing, and run off with it, and have it for my own, somewhere in the house where Joy lives?

Then, while I dreamed of these things, I heard a little noise outside, and there at my door sat two waifs and strays whom fate and fortune had tossed and buffeted until they were forespent. I lifted up the hat of the one, and I undid the blessed bonnet-strings of the other, and lo, it was my parents; and here was my orphan asylum at last, fallen on my very doorstep!

Only consider how much better fortune had done for me than I should have done for myself! How much better than adopting an unlimited orphan asylum, a stray foundling, or a spouse "so outwearied, so foredone," as the

Digitized by Google

one previously mentioned, was it to find myself in a twinkling the proud possessor of a lusty brace of parents between whom and the world I stand as natural protector! Here is adoption enough for me. My orphan asylum, my foundling, my husband, might have been to me for shame and undoing. The asylum might have gone on a mutiny; the foundling might have broken out all over in hereditary tendencies; for the choice flowers of English speech in which I should have sought to instruct its infant tongue, the vicious suckling might have returned me profanity and spontaneous billingsgate; it might, too, have been vulgar, tending to sneak into corners and chew gum. These are not things I have reason to expect of my parents. As for a man — a living, eating, smoking man — I need not enlarge on the temerity of a woman who would voluntarily adopt into a well-regulated heart a totally unexplored husband.

No; if a woman will adopt, parents are the best material for the purpose. They will not be insubordinate; from the days when from the vantage of my high chair I clamored sharply with my spoon for attention, and received it, have they not been carefully trained in the docility befitting all good American

Digitized by Google

parents? Nor, being in their safe and sober sixties, are they likely to blossom into naughtinesses, large or small, so that the folk will shoot out their lorgnettes at me, sneering, "Pray is this the best you can do in the way of imparting a bringing-up?" — And how much better than an adopted husband are an adopted father and mother! They will not go about tapping cigar ashes over my maidenly prejudices; they will tread gingerly and not make a horrid mess of my very best emotions. Yes; to all ladies about to adopt, I recommend parents.

I warn you, however, that you must go about your adopting pretty cautiously. It is never the desire of the genuinely adoptive to inspire awe, still less gratitude. The parent becomes shy under adoption; at first he recoiled from my fire that warmed him, and she held back from my board that fed her. They flagrantly declared that they wanted to go home — their own home, the home that was n't there. But I held on to them, affirming that I had caught them, fair prey in a fair chase, and never, never would I let them escape into any little old den in a great waste world that they might have the bad taste to prefer. At this they sulked, courteously, resignedly. Worst of all, they looked at me with

Digitized by Google

the strange eyes with which one regards that alien to all men, a benefactor. The adopter must be patient — waiting, showing slowly how shabby it is of parents, when their children give them bread, to give them in return that stone, gratitude.

Thus, after a while, the parents will find themselves growing warm and well-fed and cozy and comfortable, and they will begin to put forth little shoots of sprightliness and glee. Instead of concealing their shabby feet under petticoats and desks and tables, out will come the tattered seam and worn sole, and, "Shoe me, child!" the parent will cry. Or, when one goes tripping and comes home again, the parents will come swarming about one's pockets and one's portmanteau demanding, "What have you brought me, daughter?" These are the things the adopter was waiting and watching for, and wanting.

Thus my dreams have come true, my ideal has found me. In the streets and on the trolleys of the world I am no longer a stranger. "Allow me, sir, my turn at the car-strap, none of your airs with me, if you please; despite petticoats, I, too, am a family man. I am none of your lonely ones; I, also, belong to a latch-key, have mouths to feed, have little ones at home." At the sound of my key

Digitized by Google

they will fly down the stairs, fall upon and welcome me in to my hearth and my slippers, and together in the fire-glow, the parents and I shall have our glorious topsy-turvy Children's Hour.

You, sir, who elbow me going business-ward, are you plotting surprises for birthdays and Christmas Days and holidays and other days? So, too, I. Sometimes a pretty little check comes in, not too small nor yet so big as to be serious. Then I scamper over the house until I find him. The rascal knows what's coming. We regard the check right-side up first, then over I flip it on its face and write, "Pay to the order of ——," and by that time down he is and deep he is, among those precious book-catalogues previously annotated, jotting wantonly, like the prodigal father Heaven made him.

Do you, sir, in your pride and fatness, marshal your brood to the theater? So I, mine. And do the eyes of your brood, which is young, glow and brighten, twinkle or grow dim, as you watch, half so prettily as do those of my brood, which is old? Can you, you commonplace, sober-going fathers and mothers of families obtained by the ordinary conventions of nature, know the fine, aromatic flavor of my fun?

Digitized by Google

ON ADOPTING ONE'S PARENTS

What exhilaration have you known like my pride of saying, "Whist you, there, parents out in the cold world, in here quick, where it is warm, where I am! in, away from that bogey, Old Age, who will catch you if he can — and who will catch me, too, before the time, if I don't have you to be young for!"

Digitized by Google

IN DEFENSE OF WORRY

IN view of the unjust disrepute of anxiety as a form of mental exercise, an examination of the many good reasons why we should worry is sharply pertinent.

The best argument for worry is the kind of people who tell you not to. Their smooth foreheads are likely to suggest a corresponding internal blankness. It seems as if even to themselves they must be savorless, these never-worriers. As to achievement, they can never reach the highest; they may jog complacently either on a mediocre level of success or may, like Mr. Micawber, dance nimbly along the surface of flat failure, but to attain the sure foot that scales the heights one must possess a vivid sense of pitfalls. Poor dullards of optimism, they miss the zest of that success granted only to those who have worried out a course of conduct to meet the most pessimistic forecast of the future.

As a friend the confirmed optimist is monotonous. You like a few ups and downs in a friend. The never-worrier offers the resilience of a punching-bag to the blows dealt him by his own life, and a corresponding indifference

Digitized by Google

to the blows dealt him by yours. In order to worry well over some one else one has to be thoroughly practiced in worrying over one's self. We all know that when we want sympathy we turn to the best worrier we can find, knowing that he will take our case right on and have a fit over it. When we are choosing a comrade, we find the fact that a person has denied himself the enriching luxuries of worry a positive deterrent.

Another argument for worry is the kind of books that tell you not to. Apart from their character, their very popularity furnishes cause for profound regret that people desire to buy even joy at wholesale, that they may demand even cheerfulness in the terrible tins of the ready-made. Such cheerfulness is sadly attenuated by the absence of good, meaty truth. The only cheer that contains nutriment is the kind that you raise in your own garden and put up with your own hands. A work that can announce itself to the dry-goods counter as "The Happy Book" is a book promptly shunned by readers who read. Such a book is as true to life as a child's book of sketches — shapes whose conventional outlines make them pass for men and women and wheelbarrows, daubed in colors of unshaded radiance.

Digitized by Google

The manufacturers of the happy book and the happy ending are unhampered by such bagatelles as life and truth and art, and thus perhaps their nursery pinks and blues may bring joy to all but two perverse classes, the writers who yearn to portray life, the readers who yearn to have it portrayed. These two classes belong, however, to the still larger one of worriers-by-conviction. They remember, perhaps, a certain passage of inimitable anguish over the casting of a little silver image. Why should Cellini have worried over his Perseus? Merely because he was Cellini and an artist. They remember the sweatings and the blood-lettings with which certain books have come forth — books not happy, perhaps, but for all eternity great, because by painting truth they clear our eyes and strengthen our wills to manufacture our own happiness.

The worriers-by-conviction know that in no department of life is the maxim that conscience makes cowards of us all so true as in the æsthetic. Fear is the beginning of imagination, and the only kind possible to dull minds. It follows that fear is the first step in the evolution of appreciation, which finds its flower in the creative temperament. All along the advance, pessimism, pointing out the

Digitized by Google

shadows, prying into the pitfalls, sharpens the sense for values of which true art must be composed. The imagination that is able to visualize any success worth achieving must necessarily be able to visualize failure and to quiver beneath the lash of its possibility. The artist who does not worry had better instantly spur himself to worry over that fact, for worry is a fundamental intellectual asset.

The moral advantages of fever and fret are even greater than the mental. Our ancestors recognized this fact and provided for it, but our pusillanimous cheerfulness recoils before their robust recognition of muscle. Knowing the placidity resultant from being unable to stand up and fight a good husky Fear on his own ground, they created the Fear and the ground, calling the one the Devil and the other Hell. There used to be a most stimulating little signboard at the entrance of hell, "Who enters here leaves hope behind," but many moderns make the depressing amendment, "There isn't any such 'here' to enter." In like manner, unconsciously, we pine for the good old devil of our forefathers. He used to be always hanging around handy for you to test your heroism upon him. He was worry incarnate, providing the most muscular exercise for anybody who wanted to wrestle.

Digitized by Google

IN DEFENSE OF WORRY

The anti-worry campaign denies the usefulness of bugaboos, whereas a really good bugaboo is a liberal education. Constant companionship with him is a training in imagination, in sympathy, in self-dependence, and, last — an argument which knocks out from under him the strongest support of the optimist — in the joy of life.

Can the non-worrier ever know the hero thrill of the hairbreadth rescues we did not make when the boat did not go down? Can he experience the pride of the economy we did not practice when the bank did not fail? Has he ever tested the quintessence of relief when the best-loved one did not die of the pneumonia she did not have? How can the poor optimist ever discover that one actually runs faster toward one's desire when the dogs of worry are nipping one's heels? Never the goal so alluring, never the pace so fleet, never the tingle of achievement so keen, as when one perceives the prize threatened. What does he know about success, the man who has never feared that he might fail? What does he know about happiness, anyway, the man who believes in being happy all the time? The truth is that worry puts a gilt edge of joy on everything.

But worry, to be genuinely educative,

Digitized by Google

should be systematic and not slipshod. The worrier should have convictions to meet those of the good-cheer propagandist. But in this effort after analysis and argument your worrier must be mindful of one danger. Method with melancholy inclines to have the same result as the proverbial tear-bottle offered to the crying child. In other words, worry is an elusive visitor; welcomed and analyzed, she is as likely as not to go flying out of the window.

Digitized by Google

COURTESIES AND CALORIES

A WORD of newly acquired importance has a way of shoving us from complacency with an upstart's aggressiveness. Of late I have not been able to make or to receive a call in comfort, nor to divert myself with the most innocuous magazine, without having my conscience bruised by the impact of the word *calorie*. A calorie is in itself merely the unit of measurement by which we reckon the nutritive value of the food we used to assimilate in happy unconcern, but in application the calorie has to me become a term symbolic of our new whirlwind campaign for efficient eating.

As I consider some of the methods employed, I cannot refrain from pointing out some possible results to our manners. In all humility let me aver that it is no supercilious observation of other people's reactions, but a sudden and alarmed realization of my own, that has prompted these few words of caution. In childhood I remember being admonished always to leave some portion of my food untouched out of consideration for a mythical personage known as "Miss Man-

Digitized by Google

ners." Has not the reader at some time been besought by nurse or parent to "leave some for Miss Manners"? When, in spite of being thus studiously trained from infancy to middle life in table technique, I have lately experienced, in discovering a dime-sized circlet of abandoned gravy on my plate, a sudden overpowering impulse to lick it up, combined with an equally overpowering conviction that in so doing I should be both benefiting some Armenian baby and serving my country, it seems high time to consider the effect upon manners and upon mentality of a too close attention to calories.

While the war on waste is one to which every creed may subscribe, my counteractive plea for business as usual in the matter of alimentation has evidence in its favor. An absorption in food values leaves us less energy to expend on activities of less material immediacy. That the popular confidence in the connection between low living and high thinking is a fallacy may be proved by a glance at the course of human achievement. The periods when people have written a great deal, discovered a great deal, painted a great deal, have also been periods when they ate a great deal. That matchless minstrel, Homer, stuffs his heroes with beef and mutton in prodigal

Digitized by Google

abandon. The fire of Kit Marlowe had for fuel

> "those dainty pies
> Of venison. O generous food!
> Drest as though bold Robin Hood
> Would, with his Maid Marian,
> Sup and browse from horn and can."

The eloquent appeal of the calorie would have been unheeded by some of our most ethereal of singers, would have been an appeal "dumb to Keats, him even"; for that young man, as great a lover as a poet, could write from heart-wrung conviction,

> "Love in a hut, with water and a crust,
> Is — Love forgive us! — cinders, ashes, dust!"

Love and literature, most unfortunately for present-day arguments, have flourished best on an abundant diet. When we look about us we perceive that our artistic and literary acquaintance are above other men possessed by a zest for food, and are obviously more productive on a generous fare than on a rigorous one. You may perhaps demonstrate the advantage to mentality of a meatless regimen by histology; you cannot demonstrate it by history; Chaucer and Shakespeare belonged to extremely carnivorous eras.

To science all things are possible, and a generation exhaustively informed about calories may in the future produce as notable

Digitized by Google

poets as those of the past, but at present evidence is against this result. Calculating each mouthful and studying the course and conduct in digestion is too engrossing to allow the free flights of genius. "Look into thy heart and write" is sound advice, but "look into thy stomach and write" is singularly sterile in literary output.

The calorie is influencing our social relations, infecting with its grossly material methods the essentially spiritual intercourse between friends. It is difficult to be at ease as a guest when the table is too conscious of its calories. One feels a horrible hesitation in measuring one's appetite to a nicety before one helps one's self from a dish. When the visitor and the hostess are both familiar with those long placards of listed per cents by which a bean is proved bigger than a beefsteak, one is constrained in consuming either of these delicacies. When the weekly budget is reckoned in calories, any indulgence at a friend's table, once a compliment to the cuisine, may nowadays be an unkind upsetting of a much-meditated ration. Matters are not improved when one becomes entertainer instead of entertained. The calorie is subtle symbol of much disintegration of courteous impulses. The spontaneity of an invitation

Digitized by Google

is threatened when hospitality halts before the possible depredation and devastation from a guest's appetite. There is for any potential hostess a temptation concisely stated by the familiar rhyme:

"Cross-patch, draw the latch,
Sit by the fire and spin,
First make a cup
And drink it up,
Then call the neighbors in!"

Weighing in all its possibilities the tyranny of H.C.L. over our generous impulses, I shudder to think to what lengths of discourtesy the arrogant little calorie may force us.

Digitized by Google

BACK-STREET PHILOSOPHY

MY eastern windows open on a wide stretch of sky and a great glory of mountains that rise to the second sash. From pink dawn to misty purple twilight, all day long the mountains display their shifting shades of magic. Between me and the mountains lies the busy, dirty back street. My house stands on a bit of a bluff from which I overlook the muddy, populous flat, but far more than a few rods of muddy road separates me from my rearward neighbors. For years I have watched their lives, but I do not know their names. We know each other by sight, of course. They must watch all the industry of our back yard — our weeding and watering of our garden, our provident garnering and canning, our coaxing of hens heedless of Mr. Hoover, all our activities with hoe and paint-brush. None of this duty-driven energy disturbs the care-free squalor of the folk down below on the mud flats; they merely observe. And we — I am afraid their squalor does not disturb us, either; we, also, merely observe. This is a vast and tragic world, offering us drama so pregnant with pity and fear that

Digitized by Google

I wonder if it is really wicked to turn aside sometimes from the play of world forces to the merry little side-shows still mercifully provided?

My neighbors below are natives of the Cumberland, mountain nomads who drift in and out from cotton mill and lumber camp for a few months' sojourn on the outskirts of the city. One humorous fact is that they belong to that same class with whom I fraternize intimately when I climb into the heart of these encircling blue heights for a summer vacation. Undoubtedly mountain people are more picturesque and engaging in their original habitat, tucked into log cabins hidden in romantic ravines — glistening rhododendron and pink foam of laurel framing their faces, swirl of white mountain water at their feet. One loves them off there as one loves the other natives of their wildwood, gray squirrel or cardinal or wheeling hawk, but here they are alien and unromantic — raw, dirty humanity, set down on raw, dirty clay, unsoftened by great brooding trees. Yet I remind myself these are the same folk whose mountain homes I frequent, gathering treasures of mountain lore. But here in the city I do not linger on dirty doorsteps for friendly chat. I am afraid of the after-intimacy which

Digitized by Google

might prove irksome here. This is not excuse, but confession. I suspect that a good many people practice democracy when they are off on a holiday, but at home follow a more permanent policy of exclusiveness.

It is surprising how much one may know of persons with whom one never talks, whom one merely sees and hears. The sounds that rise to me from the hollow below have long been familiar. At night the lives they express seem close enough to touch. Both by night and by day emotions in the back street are starkly frank. All night long I have heard a girl wail for her dead baby, a rhythmic, recurrent cry, as ancient as the mountains. We seem much nearer each other by night than by day, the denizens of the back street and I, they beneath their gaping roofs, and I on my cozy sleeping-porch. Often in the winter darkness I hear a door opened and the ring of an axe on the stillness, for the back street, taking no thought for to-morrow, takes no thought even for to-night — it chops its wood when the small-hour chill demands it, and no sooner. Sometimes, but this very rarely, the silence rings with drunken shouts and maudlin laughter and I know that a "bootlegger" has slipped into town from some covert still, and has boldly knocked at sleeping doors,

Digitized by Google

offering his welcome "moonshine." Again I sometimes wake on a frosty autumn night to a summons that resounds jovially from door to door, while hounds bay and boys hurrah as the hunters gather to go after 'possum.

It is strange how little the city is conscious of these strangers clinging to its skirts. The strangers themselves live, so far as they may, exactly the same life they might live in some far little settlement in the heart of the mountains. Just as off there, they adjust their existence to the will of the weather. I observe them thoughtfully as I watch them give themselves up to the sun. Pure basking is a privilege most of us have stupidly given over to the quadrupeds, but it is a pleasure my mountain neighbors still retain in all its sybarite perfection, that of "just setting." Why be harried by unwashed dishes, unchopped wood, untended garden, when the sun is shining, somnolent and golden?

It would be unfair to imply that the back street never works, for sometimes it does, when the stimulus of bright, tonic air is irresistible. I remember a spontaneous communal washing on one merry January morning, when the genial thermometer ran blithely up to a comfortable seventy, and bare arms twinkled at outdoor tubs, and great black cauldrons

Digitized by Google

bubbled over leaping flame, and greetings and gossip ran from fire to fire, while clothes-line and bushes leaped with wind-whipped garments of rainbow color — how is it that poor people all over the world have such a tendency to vivid underwear? From time to time clothes bundled themselves indoors to be ironed. Chimneys belched blue smoke, and a little girl went scurrying about with a scorched ironing-board that served home after home in turn. It was a merry wash-day, all the merrier for not coming oftener than once a two-month and for being socially performed. The back street has solved the weather riddle in a way to command attention. It could never have responded so joyously to that happy day if it had not meekly bowed to the black weather preceding and sat patiently huddled to the hearth, imprisoned by long-continued sleet and sluggish chill. Why in the world should only bears hibernate?

In another respect the back street resembles the beasts of the field or the gypsies of the road; it has no household impedimenta. It lights its night-way with smoky little lamps; it draws its water from the hillside spring in a lard pail. A lard pail is about as efficient a method as a Danaid's sieve, but neither

Digitized by Google

time nor cleanliness is an importunate element in the back street's life as in ours. That path to the spring is often romantic, for one may be a Rebecca, comely and heart-shattering, just as well with a lard pail as with a shapely ewer. Love-making down below there expresses itself in free-foot gamboling and sparkling flirt of water, and in shouts musical with mountain melody.

Curious how much one may know of people whom one merely watches from a window. Of course one sometimes draws the wrong deduction. For two years I diagnosed a certain active youngster as a girl, according to her petticoats. I am disconcerted by her recent blossoming into knickerbockers. Very rarely some individual from the muddy hollow climbs our hill, knocks at our door. One of these was a seedy, vacant-eyed gentleman presenting a penciled claim to our charity, averring, according to the soiled scrap of paper, that he was a widow with seven small children. We gently set him straight as to his gender, and he went his way, unoffended. But the back street rarely begs — that is, it asks us for nothing more substantial than flowers. Solemnly important little barefoot girls sometimes request blossoms for a funeral. They never ask anything for the many babies,

Digitized by Google

for the blowing-in of a little life out of the dark is too casual an occurrence for emphasis. Sometimes these little lives are quickly snuffed out, and then perhaps a rattling wagon is obtained and a rickety horse; a woman climbs in, and from below her husband hands up the little bare grocery box, which she holds tenderly on her knees, as they go jogging off — I do not know to what unrecorded burial.

Although families drift in and out of hovels never painted, never shingled, back-street life remains ever the same in its activities, and in its profound inactivity. Are they so badly off, the back-street neighbors? Babies are chubby; young girls spring to beauty, straight and supple. True, epidemics scourge the muddy flat sometimes, but on the whole life runs merrily. The truant officer does not seem to bother the youngsters. Kites float up with jolly shouts on bright mornings when little boys better cleaned and clothed are chained to desks. Undoubtedly we leave the back street to go its irresponsible way without nagging it by city rules of sanitation or education. And what if one is low-souled enough to like to watch it just as it is? There is one comfort for one's conscience. Perhaps the back street also watches us: perhaps our per-

Digitized by Google

petual back-yard briskness gets on its nerves, as its indolence gets on mine. Perhaps it is every now and then shaken by qualms about its duty to its better-street neighbors. Perhaps it looks up to our thriving garden while the snuff-sticks wag and wonder and mutter, "Why coddle hens and water flower-beds and paint your steps, while you might so happily 'just set'?" Perhaps even back-street complacency is prodded by a conscience that pricks, saying to itself, "We really ought to cross the road and climb the stone steps and teach those frenzied workers how to bask."

Digitized by Google

APRIL BURIAL

IT is a gracious privilege, softening the anguish of our sorrow, when we may fold away the body of a loved one beneath the sod of spring. The April burgeoning eases all grief. The golden sun at the edges of the carriage curtains affirms a golden world beyond the black bar that for a few brief hours shuts us from life's sweet daylight. Above the stealthy, sable-clad movements that lower the casket, rings the love-call of a robin, and gay little winds, blown from some far shrine of tender mirth, scatter the grim words "dust to dust" among the green branches. In April it is impossible to doubt the holiness of all seed-time. Privileged to stand by an open grave on some green and golden morning of the blossoming year, one is received into the communion of the trees, and in that moment knows beyond any peradventure that the loneliness to come is fraught with some mysterious fruitage. April is the month when it is easiest to believe the resurrection, and yet all of us whose lives have been dedicated to understanding the experience that we name loss, know that this April reassurance holds true for every

Digitized by Google

day of the year. All grief that is deep enough has a generative power that constantly creates in us faculties mysteriously buoyant, and releases within us unguessed capacities of human comradeship.

We do not often enough examine those regions of our soul where it is always April, where for every man and woman who is alive, something new is always blossoming into being. We always hesitate to visit graves, fearing to find those seed-places still raw from the planting, and thus fail to discover them already green with unexpected promise. We do not observe how often spring is fulfilled within our own life. We are heavy-witted with habit, and when once we have termed an experience hopeful or painful, lucky or sad, we do not perceive that since we labeled it, it has changed its nature, and is actually producing fruits totally different from the name we give it. We bow above some spot where a hope lies buried, and do not note that already it has sprung up into beauty, and is filling our life with fragrance. In no experience are we stupider in our appraisement than in that commonest and saddest of all, for always we say of the death of loved ones — mother, child, husband — that we have lost them.

Digitized by Google

APRIL BURIAL

Not in those first broken and blinded months, but afterward, as the slow years round out to fulfillment, is it possible to retrace and review the long path of our loneliness. Wherein are we different men and women from what we might have been had they never been lent to us, our beautiful dead? Might it not be an April offering to stop for a little while and remember?

Was it a child who died? Which of the living daughters seems to-day so close to her mother as the little girl who is gone? Grown up and busy with their varied lives, it is not they, but the other, who comes to slip an arm through her mother's in the gloaming. A father, growing old, may read in his living son's eyes all the truth of his senility, but he knows that for the little lad who died at five he will always be a very prince of daddies. In the physical world love is always threatened with severance. We fear the many ways in which our children may draw apart from us, even while they are still close enough for our hands to touch. Sometimes we tremble with the apprehension, false or true, that our loved ones do not quite believe in us, but how clear of purpose and unafraid mothers and fathers walk who are conscious always of the unsullied baby confidence of the toddlers taken

Digitized by Google

from them before they had grown old enough for any secret distrust. They always understand us, our children who are dead, and they have a strange earthly continuance, due to the fact that all our life is consecrated to their imagined approval, so that we ourselves give their personality a persistence that fate denied.

In analogous manner a parent passed from us has sometimes a domination for good that cannot be overestimated. A dead mother sometimes absorbs into herself all the loveliness that we associate with that beautiful word, and out of a child's solitude and his hunger for an unknown presence is built a shrine of motherhood that is a secret refuge from all the cruelty of life. We all know men and women who speak with splendid pride and confidence of the mother they never saw.

The children who have lost fathers in this war enter upon a holy heritage. Some actual children whom we know through the battle memoirs of their fathers are typical of many others. Surely Thomas Kettle's "daughter Betty" will have a womanhood sacred to understanding the immortal sonnet from the field, assuring her that

Digitized by Google

"We fools, now with the foolish dead,
Died not for flag, nor King, nor Emperor,
But for a dream, born in a herdsman's shed
And for the secret Scripture of the poor."

Surely there will be for the little Vally, son of the brilliant young dramatist, Harold Chapin, no more precious reading than the letter his father wrote to him from the Front. May it not be that the home from which a father has gone to a soldier's death becomes a holy place, a school of heroism for any child? Unconsciously the household conduct will refer constantly to the desires, the standards, of the absent dead. Beautiful memories must haunt and hallow every room. All budding dreams, all growing ideals, will focus in a child's thoughts of his father. No boy ever yet forgot a father that died for freedom — a living father he might sometimes forget or disregard — a father lifted to the perspective of heroic sacrifice is a father to dominate every thought, every moment. The coming generation will follow without faltering where the fathers shall forever lead.

No mother's thoughts ever wander far from her dead child; no son is ever so preoccupied that he is not constantly referring his purposes to a dead father's sanction. Always a confident understanding exists be-

Digitized by Google

tween parents and children living and dead. But this clear comprehension is equally characteristic of all other forms of bereavement, for always we feel that we understand the dead better than the living. And always we are sure that our dead understand us. Two causes explain this revelation of spirit to spirit, this mysterious April flowering of the grave.

Grief alone gives us leisure to appreciate. Our dead are the only people we ever take time for. In our daily existence we are so hurried and harried by a hundred details, so duty-driven that mere loving seems a form of self-indulgence. At heart we loved our lost ones too well for any great cruelty, any deep neglect, but the little things we did not do haunt us piteously. Why did we think we were too busy for the tiny ways of tenderness?

> "A kiss would seem so simple,
> So slight a thing a smile."

We never quite forgive ourselves that we did not speak

> "Such words as we deny them
> Only because they live."

Not until they have passed beyond the hurly-burly of earth do we have time to ponder their little peculiarities, their quaint whimsies and quirked phrases, which, so small, were yet

Digitized by Google

significant of a spacious kindliness of soul. Our petty blindnesses, our petty unkindnesses, would break our hearts if we did not feel such vain regret disloyal to those who loved us as we loved them. They were once human, too; perhaps they, too, remember something they are sorry for. One of the keenest sensations of grief is that of their bright and blithe forgiveness. They seem to twinkle at us, and smile and say, "What difference does all that nonsense make, now that we both understand?"

If all earth is sacred to planting, if every April is the symbol of a sacrament, perhaps loneliness itself is a seed ordained to an unguessed fruitage, not alone after our death, but here. Human comradeship would be an abortive growth if it were subject to the brevity of physical contact — for its perfecting it sometimes needs to be supplemented by the leisured evaluation of grief. If we think with full honesty of those who have gone from us, do we not see how much better we know them now than before they went away? The years of separation have been a gift to us, revealing not merely the immensity of our bereavement, but revealing also, as time alone could do, the beatitude of our present possession.

Digitized by Google

Not only time, but also separation, affords us opportunity for surer sympathy. We can see souls more clearly when they are freed from the obscurations of the flesh, their flesh and ours. Only by means of removal are we able to look upon character cleansed of the immediate and lifted into the aspect of the eternal. We know that even earthly absence is sometimes salutary, the best restorative of exhausted intimacy. Despite affection, little tricks of gesture weary our eyes, obstinate little habits tease our nerves, until the soul they hide is wholly concealed by blundering body. All these small impacts are forgotten at a distance, and spirit shines clear in our absent converse, and dominates inalienably the harmony of return. Not alone the contact that is wearing threadbare is restored by periods of remoteness; the most concordant association needs sometimes the tonic of absence, by which two people, each setting forth alone, can make discoveries and win trophies to bring back for sharing.

The separations of life and the separations of death are alike curiously educative, not alone in new knowledge of those who leave us, but in new knowledge of ourselves. We did not realize how large a share those others had in shaping us. When they were here they

Digitized by Google

seemed earth-bound and fallible like ourselves, but now we perceive with what high motive their every act was illumined, and we accord them the imitation that is one function of grief; when we make honest scrutiny of ourselves we find that there is no living person who exerts upon us such coercive influence as do our dead. It may be that we would not have heeded their advice so completely if it had been spoken, anxiously dinned into our ears, perhaps; now, unvoiced, it has grown significant with deathless wisdom. Are we not often blind to this April blossom of bereavement, the mystical high communion to which our lives are set?

The full import of human intercourse is not yet declared to us, but the care with which comradeship is perfected, sometimes by association, sometimes by separation, should sting us to high surmise, as seeds in earth might tingle to the promise of spring.

Even in heaviest sorrow we use of our dead no harsher word than lost, in itself a term instinct with hope. We say that we have lost them, but not that they have lost anything, for no matter what creed we hold, we never picture them as sad. What is lost is not destroyed, does not part with its identity, and may at any time be restored to us. That de-

Digitized by Google

spair is black, indeed, which has no expectation of reunion. We may utterly deny this hope even to ourselves, yet in the depth of each sorrowing soul there will be found a germinal *perhaps*. But strangely, stupidly, we postpone to some unknown future day this reunion with our loved ones. When we die we may rejoin them, we tell ourselves, as if the resurrection were a flower of sudden consummation, instead of being, like every other human hope, already begun in our earth-existence, and merely completed in the life beyond death. Already at this very hour and moment we possess all the finest privileges of companionship. None of those qualities most valuable to human affection have we ever really lost. We do, indeed, miss many precious things sacred to earth and to the body: the twinkle in the eye, but what was that except as it expressed the quaint, merry spirit? the touch of the hand, but what was that except as it signified love? the swift thudding of little feet on the gravel, but did our ears really prize that sound except as it said the child was so glad to come home to us after school? Surely whatsoever things are loveliest in earthly intercourse we still possess inalienably: a mutual understanding, forever secure against estrangement, an hourly intimacy

Digitized by Google

not subject to earthly distance, and best of all, the sharing of that aspiration which we lay bare to the soul of the dead, but hide from any nearer comrade, since, in our pitiful self-consciousness, we are afraid to tell any living being how hungry we are for God, how intensely we long just to be good. Of these priceless privileges of human comradeship no grave has ever robbed us, nor can ever rob.

It is life that can sever. Life has many ways of separating us, but death has only one, and that one is merely apparent and superficial. The disintegration of the grave is a slight thing compared with the corroding estrangements of life. There are living people whom we once loved who now are so far removed from us that it seems as if all eternity could not restore them. Sometimes the fault was in our gross misunderstanding of them, sometimes in theirs of us. We have seen friends once noble slowly subdued to decay through some selfish course, until, while they still hold out their hands to our love, we turn from them in despair. Much of earthly association, externally smooth, is inwardly hesitant and dogged with doubt. By contrast how holy and how honest is our communion with our dead! Both the friends here and the friends beyond our sight are graciously sent us for

Digitized by Google

our strengthening and our joy, but so fallible are we all that only those passed from us are forever safe from all misunderstanding and all cruelty on their part or on ours. Because of this security they have become the warp and woof of our being. They are nearer than we know.

How close they seem to us sometimes, our dead! Sometimes we wake drowsily, feeling all the darkness palpitant with their presence. Perhaps they yearn to reach us through all the barricades of sense. It is disloyal to doubt that they still love us as we love them. They, too, have learned to understand us better, as we them, since we were parted. Always, when we think of them, we have a sense of happy intimacy. Invisible though they are, we are aware of serene eyes, of strong presences freed from the old sad handicap of pain. Sometimes they even seem to be laughing at us, beautiful laughter like the mirth of little April winds above a grave — divine merriment of reassurance, as if they were trying to tell us that our feet were sundered from them merely that they might learn to knit step to theirs more blithely here and hereafter. At times we shiver a little, remembering how dull we were to their beauty when they were with us of old, or conjecturing how earth-life

Digitized by Google

with its myriad means of severance might have menaced this our present glad security. In these long years we have seen the flowering of the grave, we have tasted the fruitage of our loneliness. When we enter that existence that consummates earth, clear faces of love will smile in greeting, and some sweet, amused voice will welcome, asking us, "Did you really think that you had lost me when in no other way could I have walked so close to you all this while?"

Digitized by Google

GRACE BEFORE BOOKS

WE live in an age that does not ask the blessing. To some of us, wistful for an older fashion, the world may seem to have had comelier manners in days when little children *did* say grace in every Christian kind of place. There is a spiritual *gaucherie* in our present sheepishness before the Unseen, an æsthetic loss in the fact that heads no longer bow and knees no longer kneel in instinctive reverence. It is to no graceless age that literature owes the tender homeliness of the blessings that Herrick asked, or the exquisite gratitude implied in Lamb's protest against "Grace before Meat." These were two men who always sat down with a relish to the meal of life, although the fare that was served them may look to us harsh enough. It was because he found so many things holier to enjoy that Lamb deprecated a ritual of thanks confined to "the solitary ceremony of manducation."

We to whom life may sometimes seem a bitter banquet, squalidly set forth, may sometimes, reading, envy Lamb, seeing that neither the stale boredom of the counting-house nor

Digitized by Google

the acrid sting of the madhouse ever spoiled the gusto of his palate. It is with the high-heart gayety that is the finest essence of thanksgiving that he demands:

"A form for setting out upon a pleasant walk, for a moonlight ramble, for a friendly meeting, or a solved problem. Why have we none for books, those spiritual repasts — a grace before Milton, a grace before Shakespeare, a devotional exercise proper to be said before reading 'The Faërie Queene'?"

A poet of to-day has echoed Lamb's desire:

> "Myriad-leaved as an elm;
> Starred with shining word and phrase;
> Wondrous words that overwhelm,
> Phrases vivid, swift, divine;
> Gracious turn of verse and line —
> O God, all praise
> For a book: its tears, its wit,
> Its faults, and the perfect joy of it."

In an age when tongue and pen alike are stiff and straitened in the utterance both of prayer and praise, it were, perhaps, an exercise enfranchising for the spirit to formulate certain graces for those books that, devoured, have become our bone and sinew and red corpuscle, but that we have received and relished with "never a civil word to God." The dishes named in Lamb's book-feast have been

Digitized by Google

also the chief dishes of our own sustenance. We might offer this tardy grace for Milton:

"Jehovah, who dost speak by prophets, we thank thee for thy prophet-poet, for music martial with the battle-cries of hell and heaven, and melodious with the peaceful praise of earth, for manhood austere and lonely, for faith fearless in defeat and darkness; through him may we believe that genius is greatest through speaking the glory of God, that the scholar is wisest through the study of holiness; that the soldier is bravest who, unbroken unto death, serves no king but God."

To image a world without Shakespeare is as hard as to image an earth without the sun; but which one of us has ever thanked God for him? In saying grace for the king of words, all others' words must stammer:

"God in man, we thank thee that to one man thou didst lend thine own creatorship to make a world; we bless thee that each one of us may enter there and, in the only poet speech that ever made word and passion one, may hear souls speak fear, hate, love, and know each soul only our own made myriad by a poet's magic; and, looking within our own heart to find there Hamlet and Caliban, Romeo and Puck, may see, with God and

Digitized by Google

Shakespeare, the universal heart, which to perceive is to pity, which to understand is to love, which to reverence is to aspire."

It should not be in the humdrum language of every day, but in the woven melody of the Spenserian stanza that we ask a blessing upon our reading of the poet of the poets:

"God of beauty, we thank thee for those woods and waters of enchantment where knights and ladies ride to the adventure of a wizard's brain, where shines forever a light that never shone, where lies forever a world that never was. We thank God for one who out of the bleak stones of rectitude could build a palace of radiant righteousness, bright with beings moving forth from faërie to the harmonies of a music timed to earth's hidden heart-beats and to the pulsing of the stars. We whose lives are prose thank God that the poets' poet chose to sing in imperishable story the grace of goodness and the loveliness of love."

But would one who was himself past-master in appreciation and its expression have approved these our blessings before books? One wishes that Lamb himself had set to words his gratitude for his poets. We can utter no grace he could not have bettered, except perhaps one, a grace for Elia himself:

Digitized by Google

GRACE BEFORE BOOKS

"Father, who in love didst ordain sunshine to cheer our eyes and laughter to cheer our souls, we thank thee for that great and simple man, because his mirth was as that of the flowers, which every morning praise thee. We thank thee for wit and wisdom and whimsey, and all the sun-bright weapons thou didst give him against a darkling fate. We thank thee for one who, loving the men of the past as he loved the men of the present, is by us loved even as he loved. We thank thee for one who loved a book as he loved a man, and we thank thee for his book because it is himself."

Digitized by Google

SOME REASONS FOR BEING REJECTED

I SOMETIMES wonder by what wireless communication editors attain their unanimity of attitude and phrase. Presumably seated in many several offices, how do they so often contrive to say the same thing at the same time? A few years ago illustrated magazines exhibited a brief but conspicuous identity in cover designs, all showing infancy in bedtime costume. For a while children in nighties and pajamas capered in droves over the counters of all stationers. Now, how did every artist know that every other artist was going to the night nursery for models?

Looking back over a dozen years of Grub Street, I find that the fashions for editors are just as contagious as those for illustrators. By seeing the date alone of a rejection, I can give the editorial reasons without further investigation as to what editor or what magazine. I write as one who has attained the doubtful dignity of the personal letter of refusal. I find that ten years ago editors very generally rejected me because my manuscripts did not "quite compel acceptance." Now this is an

Digitized by Google

over-civil statement of the over-civility of my gentle little sketches and tales. The truth is, they grew up in New England and were never trained in cowboy manners. "Compelling acceptance" always suggests to my mind a mustachio'd ranchman presenting a pistol and a check to some lone bank clerk and demanding gold in exchange. This money-or-your-life method of "compelling acceptance" is as impossible to my stories as it would be to the ladies, fragrant with boxwood and lemon verbena, about whom I like to write.

A few years later the phrase polite for "no admittance" changed. The buffet became more robust and ringing. Editors at this period asked for "a little more ginger." Six or seven years ago all editors were crying for "ginger." I could not give it to them, but so many other people could and did, that presently they had enough ginger and were passing on to demand stronger condiment: they no longer wanted ginger, but "a little more pep, please." Editors at this stage were becoming less gentle in language as well as in desires. At first I merely could not "quite compel acceptance," but later rebuff was administered in figurative speech that became constantly more arresting. "Ginger" and "pep" were mild and gastronomic in sugges-

Digitized by Google

tion, but from the "pep" period on, editorial imagery has been becoming more and more vigorous.

For a long time "punch" dominated the vocabulary and intentions of all periodicals. It made no difference what other accomplishments a manuscript might possess: if it could not "punch," it might as well stay at home. A writer had no choice but to drop contemplation, remove his coat, hand his spectacles to his wife, adopt the language of the prize-ring and "punch" his reader — an audacious enterprise and productive of more unanimity in rejection than any other course I have pursued.

My literary career under enforced editorial guidance has steadily advanced from suavity to violence. At first I tried merely to "compel attention"; next I obediently served "ginger" and "pep"; after that, weakly and mildly, have I endeavored to "punch"; but there are progressive ordeals yet before me. To "punch," in the prize-fight, there is allowed a degree of decorum; there are still rules for the game in "punching," but I discover that even "punch" is obsolescent. This morning an editor returns my offerings with the comment, "Excellent of their kind, but I prefer stories with more '*kick*'!" Can I, must I, "kick"?

Digitized by Google

According to the cumulative demand of editors for ferocity, after "kick," what? Next week shall I be requested to "stab"? To make a stiletto of the innocent pen whose first efforts were taught manners by Sir Roger de Coverley? I wonder how Addison and Irving would have responded if they had been asked to "kick." My pained imagination looks forward into the years of bread-winning still before me, to read in fancy the reasons for future rejection, as editors become more frenzied and more figurative. Will it be:

"We are under orders to accept no freight at this dépôt except high explosives"; or, "No magazine can keep on the market to-day that is not prepared to blow the reader's brains out."

Two things I am pondering. Does the reader never long to be approached by methods of peace and propriety? Even if he is that ogre of the artist, the Tired Business Man, is drubbing my sole manner of meeting him? If it is not, it is high time you said so, reader, to ears having authority. If you do not speak out, the treatment in store for you is no exaggeration on my part. I am behind the scenes, and I know. I have it straight from Cæsar that I must "kick" you,

Digitized by Google

so impervious are you to ways of pleasantness.

The other thing I am pondering is, what will be the editorial reason for rejecting this essay.

Digitized by Google

THE STORY IN THE MAKING

FOR some years I have followed in various magazines those various outpourings that throw light on literature in the making, studying to see just how literature lays hold of my fellow workers. I often wonder how other people make stories.

For me the most frequent way in which the embryonic story presents itself is as a face, a piquant, challenging face, glimpsing at me, as it were, out of a mist. "Complete my anatomy, discover my character, write my story, if you dare!" it seems to say, and straightway vanishes. Sometimes it is a gray old face, strange with mysterious wisdom; sometimes it is a middle-aged face, the lips twitching with subtle humor; but all the faces are alike in one respect, the promptness with which they vanish when I try to fix them with an analytical eye. From their first tantalizing elusiveness, to their last chill entombment in cold print, these bodiless beings exhibit an incredible harshness of behavior toward their best friend and well wisher, the author. They show the most incomprehensible aversion to being created. They never lend a helping

Digitized by Google

hand to their own development; they let their creator do all the work while they have all the fun.

Of course after a character has once shown its mocking, charming face peeping at you from obscuring curtains of fog, there is nothing for it but to be up and after. True, I used to be more civil to my own creations, used to think that they would come forth in gracious vividness if I would merely sit and wait with politely receptive mind. Thus I waited, until I fell asleep, and they never came. They don't fool me in that way now. I let them know at once just what sort of creator they have to deal with, and I proceed straightway to hound them down to the finish.

First, I sit with my eye fixed on that spot in the mental mist where the face has last vanished, and I look and look until my eye pierces the fog, and I find the fugitive, and slowly see form and feature, and I don't let go until —

> "There! have I drawn or no
> Life to that lip?" —

until I know the way my face parts its hair, and the way it parts its lips, until I know all the changes in its eyes, and the way it crinkles itself when it laughs. Then I must proceed to fit face with figure and costume, and next,

Digitized by Google

hardly daring to relax the grip of my glance long enough, I make the whole walk up and down in front of me so that I can see just what are the tricks of its gait. All through the process the creature has wriggled and writhed from my grasp like a very Proteus, and at the end I positively have to pound him into propriety while I fasten him to a chair in a blaze of daylight. Ten to one, he'll be off before I can get back, for I must away, hallooing into the mist again to find others for my pretty puppet to play with. Back I come after a while, pulling a reluctant train. I tack them all to their seats, for they are so mutinous that I hardly dare to turn my back upon them. I consult them at every turn, but they refuse to answer a single word. They will not say whether they prefer the mountains or the sea, whether they like their dining-rooms in orange tawny or terra cotta, whether they prefer Botticelli or Charles Dana Gibson on their walls. I do my best, but when I have clapped on the last weatherboard, and clipped off the last protruding twig of their hedgerows, they sniff at me because I do not know their tastes.

It is just here that the saddest part of my story-making begins, and the heartless company there present, well they know it. "Ha!"

Digitized by Google

they cry, "you can lead a character up to action, but you cannot make him act." How I wish that the editor and the public would receive the story at the present stage! Have I not really done enough! Perfectly ignorant of carpentry and mason-work, I have built that lordly gray pile on the hillside yonder, not to mention that bustling city in the distance. Utterly inexperienced in horticulture, I have laid out some twenty acres of landscape gardening over which the public is at liberty to wander at will; and chief, I have introduced to your acquaintance half a dozen fascinating people, most charming and sympathetic towards all humanity but their author. But this is not enough; the public demands of me yet more inspiration and perspiration. My mutineers must dance through a plot, and look as if they enjoyed it, too.

At first, of course, they are inexorably inactive. I protest and I plead hopelessly. But at last as caged animals finally condescend to the tricks of the circus ring out of very ennui, I see my characters pricking up their ears a bit at the poses I suggest. Flattery works tolerably well. "You'd look so pretty in an incident," I suggest to my heroine, and languidly she rises, but warms presently to more spirited pantomime before her mirror.

Digitized by Google

Also I appeal to their loyalty to each other, "Whist!" I cry, "here's our pretty young hero having a 2 A.M. tussle with a burglar in the coal-bin. Up with you, and down to the rescue, every man of you!" and down they scurry.

Presently, happy sight, behold the whole company prancing and pirouetting with an animation I would not have believed possible ten minutes ago! After all the trouble I have had to set them jigging, it is hard to raise a protesting voice and call a halt — "Stop! this is action, I grant you, but it is n't plot. Clear the stage! Hero and heroine and climax to the front, if you please." Such adroitness and diplomacy as I have to exert in order to persuade them all to take their proper places in the march of incidents! I try all sorts of appeal; my second lady being in the dumps, I say, "Shame! You must let Olivia have the first proposal scene. It's naughty to be jealous, and don't you remember that you have a New England conscience? It's about all you have got, too, except your eyebrows. Besides, I leave you at the end with another proposal distinctly looming upon the horizon."

I always have most exhausting arguments with my puppets about their actions. They say they are disgusted with the obsequious-

Digitized by Google

ness with which I refer to the public, and they don't believe I know anything about the public anyway; if I'd just once give them a free hand unhampered by introduction, sequence, climax, or dénouement, they would make me a plot that would make me a made man.

Somehow at last by dint of infinite patience I persuade them all to go through their proper incidents in their proper order. The next task is to make them pause in their poses long enough for me to catch up my pen and sketch them in action.

Puffing, panting, pleading, somehow or other I get them all down in black and white at last, and then, seeing that I have finished, they all come tiptoeing up to look over my shoulder at what I have written. I turn up my collar against the storm of abuse.

"Is that leering old reprobate meant for me?" inquires the most delightful grandfather I ever met in imagination.

The heroine's cheeks are hot. "I never flirted so outrageously as that with any one in my life," she cries, "not even with — " Here she glances at the hero.

"She did n't, and you had no business to say so!" he takes up the cudgels. "But, pray, what is this curious fringe I observe ornamenting my vocabulary? College slang! I as-

Digitized by Google

sure you that it never grew in any college for gentlemen. It sounds to me like an opium den, and I should like to inquire, sir, where *you* learned it!"

"Where in the world are my eyebrows?" wails the second lady.

Unable to control myself longer, I jump from my chair and turn upon them, "See here, if you think making a story is so much easier than being one, just take my desk and chair and pen and try it!"

Digitized by Google

THE WIZARD WORD

THE world is in danger of being too acutely discovered. Pretty soon there won't be any Nowhere. There will be a road-map through it for every tooting motor, a cloud-map through it for every wheeling air-ship. We are impelled to know and know and know, and all the time knowledge is such a stupid quarry to be always hunting down. The only real sport is mystery. Presently neither sea nor sky will be left for the spirit to adventure, yet the imagination must have somewhere to sail.

It is here that the world of words comes in so handily. That is a universe never to be reduced to terms of sense and science; words are too fraught with sense for that. Language is still a place of sun-gleams and shadows, of lightnings and half-lights, and things forgotten and things to be, of odors and tastes and pictures and hauntings, whole pageants of dead dynasties evoked perhaps by a small adjective. Words are so elusive, so personal, in their suggestion, that science will never bully all fancy out of us so long as we have words to talk in, to dream in.

Digitized by Google

It is just in proportion as words retain their mystery, that they retain their magic. So soon as they present too definite a picture, odor, taste, they lose their wizardry. We may outgrow our fairy tales, but there are few of us for whom some words do not always retain their witchery of suggestion, words that have never become in our minds too definite, words that still glimpse haze and mystery and the magic of ignorance. I would so much rather look into my heart for the meaning of a word than into the dictionary; it is one of many methods of defending one's imagination from the encroachments of knowledge.

Some words possess a mysterious spaciousness: try "Homeric," think it, pronounce it, and you will see in the flash of that adjective men and women growing to god-size, taller, stronger, more beautiful than any but Homer ever thought of, and you will see everything in vast numbers, great herds of cattle for the hecatomb, tens of thousands of men-at-arms surging, limitless spear-points pricking all the plain. No fleet, no army, could be so big and vast as that one word Homeric.

Another word that suggests number beyond any ciphering is the word "doubloon." Could any one ever feel so rich in terms of dollars as in terms of doubloons? This is be-

Digitized by Google

cause nobody with any imagination knows how much a doubloon is worth, or wants to, and people without any imagination can never feel rich any way, no matter how many dollars or doubloons they have.

"Galleon" is a noun that twins with doubloon. A galleon is the stanchest vessel any one can go to sea in, although it is only a word, not a ship any longer. There's a splendor, a pride, about a galleon. It glides, it never sails, and it always has favoring winds, it commands them. Nobody can picture a galleon with sails a-flap in a dead calm, or with sails in ribbons in a gale. A galleon is always mistress of all weathers. On the other hand a galleon is not altogether a craft for highest emprise, it's not what "merchant-adventurers" would sail in. "Merchant-adventurers" — there is a word that fits with a brawling and buffeting sea, or deadly tropic calm and the sighting of low, fronded islands, or the black rim of a pirate boat on the treacherous, unknown water. But what a ring of rollicking jollity and dauntless fellowship there is in that brave old compound noun, merchant-adventurers! It is one of the many words that, fading from our vocabulary, carry with them whole decades of history. It lays open all "the spacious days of great Eliza-

Digitized by Google

beth." Yet when I apply it to definite names, Drake, Forbisher, Raleigh, instantly some of the magic fades. I want no names for my merchant-adventurers.

There are other words that echo to the vastness of the Elizabethan imagination. "Empery" resounds with the thundering conquests of Tamburlaine, which in turn were but echoes of the insatiable soul-quest of Kit Marlowe. The word to me spells Marlowe, and spells Keats; not all the world could supply the indomitable desire that is dreamed of in empery, not all the kingdoms of earth were enough for the empery of Tamburlaine. Empery is richer, vaster, more insatiably desirable than empire. Empire dwindles to a petty exactness beside it. Empire is not the only word to turn to magic by the addition of the suggestive suffix, *ry*. *Ry* might be termed the supernatural suffix, for it always has a connotation of spirit-peopled places. The word "glamour" has in it a certain degree of magic, but change it to "glamoury," and see what happens, what glimmering vistas of elfland open forth. And if the *y* following the *r* be changed to *ie*, the result has even more of wizardry, which word is itself an example of my *ry* argument. Notice the difference of degree in glamour, glamoury, glam-

Digitized by Google

ourie, and in "fairy," which is mild in meaning when set beside "faërie." And is there any word in our tongue so capable of evoking the sensations of that shivery borderland between the known and the unknowable as the dissyllable "eerie"?

> "A savage place! as holy and enchanted
> As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
> By woman wailing for her demon lover!"

The connotation of words in *ry* and *rie* is an example in the superlative degree of the magic of indefiniteness, but there is plenty of conjuring power in terms which have no supernatural suggestion. All the romance of a bygone period may often be better evoked by a word than by treatises of overdone historical research.

Often some word of wearing apparel may summon forth a whole pageant of costume. Try "wimple," "kirtle," "shift." I should have no idea of the size or shape of the desired garment, should be helpless before my needle and scissors; but in spite of this ignorance, and, as I maintain, because of it, the word "wimple" shall always call up for me peaked crown and flowing veil, and the cantering and the clinking and chattering of all Chaucer's blithe procession; the word "kirtle" flashes Perdita upon my vision, Perdita, the

Digitized by Google

shepherdess-princess weaving her dance; and "shift" is a noun which crowds upon me all the crude, quick life of the ballads; for in this garment, beneath a hovering halo, forsaken ladies drowned were always floating about on midnight waters by way of reproach to their lords.

The innermost luxury of all sense-perception is never experienced from the too clearly analyzed sensation, however acute. "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter." No music has such a spell for our feet as is implied in the words "piping" and "fifing," but few of us have ever danced to piping or to fifing. In the realm of smell is any rose as sweet as the quaint word "posy"? Yet can you tell its shape, or color or odor? It is a spicy mingling of all the fragrance of all sweet gardens that ever were — or that never were!

There exists nothing so toothsome as the food and drink we have never tasted and shall never taste. A "venison pasty" never appeared on any menu we ever read, yet we know that we have never eaten anything so savory. "Mead," "canary," "mulled wine," are drinks delectable. The mighty goblets of Valhalla ran with "mead," and from them we quaff great hero draughts; "canary" fires

Digitized by Google

all our veins with the tingling, ringing young exuberance of the Mermaid Tavern; while "mulled wine" is the most comforting of toddies, soothing to sleep after the coziness and confidences of midnight slippers and dressing-gown.

There are few people so prosaic as not to possess, hidden away from their own and others' investigation as securely as every man's secret belief in ghosts, a whole conjuror's chest of wizard words. I have merely mentioned some of those nouns which have for me the power to set me free to adventure the unknown. To every man his own words, his own enchantments, so long as they have might to release from the chains of knowledge, and to unshackle the imagination for the spirit's free adventuring.

Digitized by Google

THE PLEASURES OF THE PREPOSITION

THERE is no sin in playing with pebbles, if one does not forget their connection with the stars and the suns. It is not reprehensible to "study Plato for his prepositions," if one remains mindful of the philosophic deduction that may depend on the interpretation of *παρὰ* or *ὑπὸ*. One loving the human whimsicalities of synonyms may be excused if he sometimes turn away from the bombastic importance of the noun, the nervous insistence of the verb, the glaring ornament of adjective or adverb, to regard some of the subtleties of the humble preposition.

All word-workers have their pet prepositions, and have a critical eye for writers who do not share their regard for this or that favorite, who are careless, say, with "by," or indiscriminate with "in." Unhappily there exist artists who show a lively interest in the more prominent parts of speech, but who seem to have no respect for the precious connectives; who make an ugly knot when they employ a conjunction, or stitch in a preposition with a prominence that offends the pattern.

Digitized by Google

PLEASURES OF THE PREPOSITION

The purpose of the preposition is to point out the place of its superiors, their relation each to each, "above," "below," "around," "near"; but its own place is shown by its usurping no other: its dignity consists in its obscurity. And yet the preposition is itself often so full of meaning that it requires a skillful stylist to give it all its due of significance, and at the same time confine it to its humble position.

Without the preposition, nouns and verbs, however important in themselves, might remain mere separate splashes of color or shape; it is for the preposition so to weave them into the web of the sentence that their relative positions may indicate to the full the significance of the patterned thought. Because its primary business is with placing other words, indicating each varying angle of their relation each to each — as for example whether a thing emanates "from" a man or goes "to" him or passes "through" him — the preposition is always hard to separate from its place-meaning, even with all the subtle distinctions of thought to which it may attain. Of these distinctions our adolescence, impatient of the schooling of rule and rhetoric, grows weary; but later there comes a pleasure in the play of connotation

Digitized by Google

we may employ. Prepositions become picturesque with their import for our fancy. Examine "in" and "into": "into" has a catapultic impact, suggests the splash of a stone thrown "into" the water, to be readily contrasted with the static quality of "in," the stillness, the permanence of the stones, the plants, "in" the water. The distinction sometimes veers away from the primary difference, when, for instance, the pen hesitates in writing that the individual is merged "into" the whole or "in" the whole. To my mind, the waters of oblivion close over him with more finality if he is merged "in" than "into." One enjoys preserving the accuracy of "between" and "among," conscious of all the intimacy of "between," all the promiscuity of "among." In comparing "with" and comparing "to," the imagination perceives an implication of social strata, since one compares a man "with" his fellows, in a democratic homogeneity; but in comparing him "to" another, one connotes the existence of a superior, an aristocracy by means of which we measure and contrast.

An instinct for niceties often leads us to turn to the greater subtlety obtainable by employing prepositions from another tongue than our own. The place element in a native

Digitized by Google

preposition is likely so to persist, that one substitutes for its obtrusive literalness the greater subtlety possible to the foreign preposition from its unfamiliarity. Our own "for" and "against" are heavy with place-suggestion, as against the weight of pure argument inherent in the Latin "pro" and "con." The prepositions of one's own language never can be made utterly free of literalness. Note how in "under the rose" the thought is obscured by the picture, while in "*sub rosa*" we instantly get the desired impression of all the whispered stealth of scandal. About the Latin "*circa*" there floats a delightful historic mistiness; "*circa*" 300 B.C. has a nebulosity not obtainable by the matter-of-fact "about."

Each of us has, perhaps, his pet prepositions from alien tongues, as pleasing to his pen as his favorites of his own vernacular. Who of us has not a fondness for the dear discursive "*de*," which long ago opened to us the pleasant paths of "Amicitia" and the strong self-reliance of "Senectute"? "*De*," translated into its English equivalent "concerning," has prefaced many a charming essay, and "concerning" still, whenever seen in a title, promises us entrance into all the enchanting realm of rambling.

The French "*à la*" supplies a word that

Digitized by Google

social usage could hardly do without. We less gracious races need that French term, meaning "in the manner of," for manner has with us too little importance. We need to borrow from our Gallic cousins that prepositional phrase, as we need to learn, also, some of the grace that they believe should always crown conduct. We need to manage our social activities as well as our military ones more in the French fashion. Meditating on prepositions, Gallic and Latin, one remarks the adequacy of their employment in the Latin tongues, so that they weave the substance of the other parts of speech into a blended pattern, wherein they themselves remain duly obscure. What is the significance of the contrasting behavior of the German preposition, which insists that its importance shall be felt by arranging the whole sentence to meet its needs?

Does this pen-play with prepositions seem perhaps petty, as if a grown man should toss pebbles on the seashore? But perhaps the pebbles might tell him of eternity. Do we not sometimes need to remind ourselves of what is permanent? Perhaps words are more enduring than wars. There was once a man who thought it no paltry pastime to be preoccupied with words — small words at that:

Digitized by Google

"*Hoti's* business"; "The doctrine of the enclitic *De*." Because, refusing to be confined to the contemporary, he gave his study to language, the imperishable, a great poet thought him worthy of mountain burial in "A Grammarian's Funeral."

Digitized by Google

FACES IN FICTION

ONE of the greatest difficulties for the conscientious story-writer is the drawing of faces. For many an author story-telling reduces itself to fitting a plot and an environment to a pair of burning eyes, or a pair of subtle lips suddenly visioned forth from chaos. He is not conscious of creating men and women, but merely of explaining their physiognomy. Every novelist walks through life surrounded by a crowd of faces, not only finished in every detail of line and color, but challenging with spirit-life to be investigated. The souls flickering behind these palpitant masks are importunate for the author's veracity, and frequently he feels helpless so to transfer a countenance from his own to the reader's retina that eyes, nose, mouth shall not belie the character they are meant to indicate. A writer needs to ascertain some of the laws and some of the dangers of face-making if he is to picture to his reader's imagination exactly the same people he has first pictured to his own.

The first peril one meets in portraiture is that of so accentuating some one feature as

Digitized by Google

to produce a caricature. On the other hand, impartial attention to separate features often fails to give any unified impression; detailed description either descends to the dullness of a catalogue or misses effecting any picture at all through ignoring one essential fact of the average reader's psychology — lengthy word-painting, however excellent in itself, misses its aim because sustained visualization is impossible for most people. They lose the picture by their very effort to give it continuous attention, whereas they can keep on reading appreciatively as long as something is happening or somebody is talking, just as most of us are less exhausted by the theater than by an art gallery. It follows that the best method of transmitting a face from the writer's brain to the reader's is not by elaboration, but by some flashing light, some flaring phrase, or sparkling figure.

Another difficulty encountered in portraiture can be instantly verified by the layman. Each one of us has at some time had trouble in describing some friend to a third person entirely ignorant of his personality. How baffled we become by the clumsy inadequacy of our words! How quickly we give up the struggle to reproduce the appearance, and fall back on the easier presentation of the

Digitized by Google

character! Spirit is easy to describe, but body is hopelessly misleading. This is why it is much harder to picture a face we know well than a face new and uninvestigated — some chance acquaintance, for example, who has arrested our attention on the street, or on a train. When a face has once become familiar, either in fact or in fancy, its externals are ever after absorbed by its expression, and by our sympathy with the soul that limns that expression. It would, therefore, seem more important that an author should paint the expression than the features, letting the reader become acquainted with people in fiction as in life by the way the light in their eyes or the droop of their lips reveals them. Yet one questions whether emphasis even on expression is necessary, seeing that in certain eminent instances it has been sufficient merely to make personality compelling, with the result that the reader conceives for himself both the features and their significance.

If we turn our attention from making pictures for other people to the example of those who have made pictures for us, the memory is instantly crowded with portraits. We discover at once that story-tellers, great or small, rarely image their characters to us by means of the face alone, sometimes not by the face

Digitized by Google

at all. Carriage, gesture, the significant attitude, even an eloquent inertness, are employed to give truth to a personality. Since the mechanics of fiction, which is something quite apart from creative force or attainment, is a science becoming every day more and more perfected, examples from the contemporary are often more illustrative in matters of workmanship than examples from the classics. A quotation from *Jacob Stahl* shows the employment of significant gesture. We forget Owen Bradley's face, but we remember, as revealing the trimness and dispatch of his whole character, his manner of handling his glasses: "one pair for working, another for general purposes. The end of a leather spectacle case protruded from his upper waistcoat pocket, and there was a complete indication of the whole method of the man in his neat rapid exchange of one pair of gold-rimmed glasses for the other."

One recalls various instances when other aspects of the body impress both author and reader as more pregnant with revelation than physiognomy. It was not Trix Esmond's head, but her feet, that made havoc with Henry Esmond's heart, feet that we can see twinkling down the polished stair, in their scarlet stockings and white shoes, scarlet

Digitized by Google

stockings with silver clocks. Feet, a wee white pair, a baby's, bare and buoyant, remembered from a magazine poem, dance in my fancy by means of the magic phrase, "unpityingly sweet." One recalls many feet in fiction, feet brutal or groping or tripping, but always feet informed by spirit, and from many a book one recollects hands equally fraught with meaning. Which to Browning connoted more of her character, as he gazed at his wife in the fire-glow, "that great brow," or the "spirit-small hand propping it"? Which holds us more, the Ancient Mariner's "glittering eye," or his "skinny hand"? Could any terms express better the ethereal pathos of Iseult of Brittany, her selfless tending of a stranger knight, fever-tossed, and her yearning widowhood bereft even of memories, than her epithet, "Iseult of the snow-white hands"?

As one studies the memory-gallery of living pictures, one is surprised to learn how often a countenance, recognized as familiar and cordial, will on examination be found to be not a whole face, but merely a part of one. Some of the most famous faces in fiction come to us only in some vivid particular, a quiet forehead serene with wisdom, a pair of smouldering eyes, a dazzle of hair. There are

Digitized by Google

some glorious heads of hair in English romance. One thinks, perhaps, first of Romola's, that ripple of living bronze in a shadowy room. Almost as quickly one sees another head, weighted with gypsy locks, abundant, ominous with rebellion from its first appearance, in the earliest pages of the "Mill on the Floss," "hair usually straight an hour after it had been taken out of paper," and incessantly tossed "to keep the dark heavy locks out of her gleaming black eyes." More gay and gracious come to us the tresses of earlier girls, sweet girls that, singing to the tune of May, go floating through mediæval poetry, crowned like Emelye with daffodil gold

> "brayded in a tresse,
> Behynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse."

It is not alone the ladies who have hair highly decorative; there are men with heads equally unforgettable. Chaucer's pardoner had

> "heer as yellow as wex
> But smooth it heeng as doth a strike of flax;
> By ounces henge his lokkes that he hedde;
> And therewith he his shoulders overspradde,
> But thine it lay by colpons oon and oon."

A comparison of hair male and female instantly brings to mind Auntie Hamps, whose head, like all the rest of her, indicates a char-

Digitized by Google

acter deliciously compounded of splendid matron and robust young man. Auntie Hamps's tresses, feminine in arrangement, still suggest the vigor and abundance of Samson's. Her circumstantial coiffure is "ample as a judge's wig. From the low forehead the hair was parted exactly in the middle for about two inches; then plaited bands crossed and recrossed the scalp in profusion, forming behind a pattern exceedingly complicated, and down either side of the head, now behind the ear, now hiding it, now resting on the shoulders, now hanging clear of them fell long multitudinous glossy locks." Clearly we call to memory Auntie Hamps's face not as a whole, but by the curls that compass it about.

As our recollection continues to dwell on the emphasis of particular features, we become overwhelmed by eyes, eyes from everywhere, eyes so varied and so compelling that one hardly knows which to choose for illustration, immortal Becky's immortal green, of course, and from a more recent novel, dear Jimmy Jevons's: "his very large and conspicuous blue eyes glittered with a sort of passion. He wore those eyes in his odd little ugly face like some inappropriate decoration," a decoration upon which his father-in-law, before conversion, poured manly contempt, saying

Digitized by Google

that Jevons's eyes would "look better in a pair of earrings than in Jevons's head."

By some chance, or perhaps through some intentional artifice, we by no means always visualize those eyes that we are made most intensely to feel. Poet or story-teller makes us aware of eyes, as he himself was aware of them — shape and color lost in the luminousness of the soul ashine in its window. Thus we do not see, but shall forever love, as Camoens loved them, the eyes of Catrina, "sweetest eyes were ever seen." Another lover has given us a line as vivid for color as it is exquisite for suggestion of character,

"Eyes of fire and bramble-dew."

One questions why there are not more mouths to remember from one's reading, seeing that in real life the mouth is so often the arresting trait, the one whose meaning is hardest to disguise, whether that meaning be pride or pathos, petulance or peace. As I think of portraits in books, the mouth that first flashes to my mind is a tortured one, but self-controlled, as one would expect from Galsworthy's pen. In the sketch, "A Christian," "the mouth, always gently smiling, as if its pinched, curly sweetness had been commanded, was the mouth of a man cruci-

Digitized by Google

fied, yes, crucified." Perhaps the reason that novelists do not dwell more on mouths is that they give us so much data for lips in what comes out of them that we should not need any further assistance in imaging them for ourselves.

As one's study goes to and fro over fiction, one discovers that the making of faces has been a progressive art. It is only within the last fifty years that writers have taken much thought for exact individualization. This does not mean that there is not many a countenance that gleams alive from the dim and dusty past: David's, the ruddy, dreamy boy, summoned from the sheep pasture at Samuel's command; Rebecca's, meeting Isaac; or from the Greek Bible, Hector's, tender with fatherhood beneath war's helmet; but the point to be noted is whether these faces were made for us, or whether we have made them for ourselves. Can we discover line or word by which to verify our impression of form and feature? The great artists of the past created the personalities, but the faces, did they actually paint them?

Homer, busy with the affairs of gods and heroes, bothered himself very little about physiognomy. He describes by means of the generic epithet, always labeling Athena "gray-

Digitized by Google

eyed," or a slave-girl "fair-cheeked," a symbolic device, giving us the correct indication of character, but leaving us to fill in the outline with our own particularization. In mediæval romance description is as little individual as in ancient epic. Epithet is expanded to a stereotyped catalogue of charms, always repeated when a lover enters, crisp hair, bright cheeks, bright eyes, smiling lips — often we could hardly tell whether the face belongs to man or maiden; but the sex is quite unessential to our fancy's activity. The poet's purpose is to paint for us a face set to the mood of love and May, for the rest we are free to make our own details. Not by their faces, so little differentiated, but by words and actions highly significant, do we conceive for ourselves our own finely particularized portraits of those exquisite lovers, Aucassin and Nicolette.

The sharp individualizing of faces was a process not developed until long after the individualizing of characters was well established. The novels of 1750 to 1850 give us plenty of friends who grip us with personality, but they appear upon the scene wearing masks as generic as those in a Greek tragedy — the beautiful young girl, the capable matron, the old man. There was a time when novel-writing required each entering char-

Digitized by Google

acter to be placarded with a certain amount of conventionalized description, a time when we expected a certain number of pages to be skipped if we were to get our money's worth from a novel. At this period conversation was as conventional as were faces. There was in the treatment of both a kind of convenient symbolism. People did not actually look or speak as represented, and every reader knew it, but both appearance and words, being stereotyped, were accepted as giving the correct general impression of the man and the mood, and a reader expected to use his own imagination for all further particulars. Not that faces as quick with life as any in literature do not come to us from before the middle of the nineteenth century, but in general we find that we have constructed the features for ourselves; the creator occupied himself only with the soul.

From 1850 on, one can observe a conscientious preoccupation with body as well as with spirit, so widespread that it becomes worth while to study the differing style and method of different story-tellers. The two great painters of background, Hardy and Conrad, present an interesting comparison in their treatment of faces. It is to be expected that the supreme master of the fusion of background

Digitized by Google

with character would portray faces whose chief quality is that they can draw into themselves, and focus, all the power and all the mystery of place. Against the wild, whispering twilight of Exmoor Heath, there flame forth as vividly as if they were supernatural the crimson lineaments of the reddle-man — "his eye, which glared so strangely through his stain, was in itself attractive, keen as that of a bird of prey, and blue as autumn mist." One cannot think of the faces in Hardy's novels except as seen against a setting as significant as the face itself, a bank of wind-wracked cloud, the dusky, gleaming wainscot of a village tap-room. Hardy's faces grow naturally out of their background, as indigenous as the gorse upon the moors. Conrad's portraits, on the other hand, are always exotic. The setting he gives is as vivid to the eye as Hardy's, and it is equally significant for the influence it is felt to have upon character; but it is not native to the face it serves to accentuate, it is alien. A picture by Conrad is always a picture of the homeless, people who move against a background of mysterious shipping or of a black African forest. Their faces are fateful for their power either to be conquered by their malign environment or to conquer it!

Digitized by Google

You cannot visualize Hardy's or Conrad's faces, as separate from their setting. In sharpest contrast to both is Meredith's manner of making his faces so mobile that all background is forgotten. No other author is so fine an analyst of a glance.

"Now she kept her mouth asleep and her eyes half down, up to the moment of her nearing to pass, when the girl opened on him, as if lifting her eyelids from sleep to the window, a full side-look, like a throb, and no disguise — no slyness or coldness either, not a bit of languishing. You might think her heart came quietly out.

"The look was like the fall of light on the hills from the first of morning — just the look that wins observant boys — they read Browny's meaning: that Matey had only to come and snatch her: he was her master, and she was a brave girl, ready to go all over the world with him."

While Meredith can see and make us see every shape and shade of feature, it is the dance of the soul over this surface that allures his craftsmanship; he is absorbed by the kinetic rather than the static qualities of the face under his pen.

Second to Meredith in his attention to mobility is James, with the difference that he

Digitized by Google

does not, like Meredith, interpret for us the play of light over features, but leaves us to guess its meaning, baffling and provocative. This method with faces is but part of James's larger method of letting us look at his characters not from the author's standpoint, as Meredith or Thackeray, but only from the standpoint of other people in the story.

Of present writers Hewlett can flash forth a countenance in the quickest and fewest words. He is particularly good at reproducing the tone and texture of skin; for example — "her skin dazzling white at the neck ran into golden russet before it reached the burnt splendor of her cheeks." Hewlett shares with Meredith the device of the suggestive figure of speech, but with the difference that Meredith's simile emphasizes the significance, as in the comparison of the schoolgirl's glance to the dawnlight on the hills; while Hewlett's comparison is usually employed purely as an aid to visualization, as when he likens a subtle Italian head, bowed and watchful in the dusk, to a silver coin glimpsed against the dark. Hewlett's best pictures belong to his Italian period, as if the clear-cut lineaments were the fruit of an imagination quickened to its keenest intensity by both the dream and the reality of Tuscany.

Digitized by Google

FACES IN FICTION

As physiognomists, writers can be readily divided into two groups, those that view faces subjectively only, and those that see with both the outer and the inner eye, perceiving on the one hand, all externals of color and shape, as sharply as a photographer, and on the other, penetrating the meaning of mouths and eyes as subtly as a portrait-painter. An arbitrarily grouped trio, related only by their objectivity, shows Chaucer, Browning, and Hewlett as never losing their sense of the outside of things. The portraits of the "Prologue" come to us finished in every external detail, yet the significance of such detail in revelation of spirit is equally memorable. To choose from Browning only one from a hundred passages in proof, in the "Flight of the Duchess" we see the actual physical transformation of the gypsy's bleared eye-sockets to a burning, mesmeric blaze exactly as vividly as we feel her mystery and majesty of soul.

There are at present two curiously contrasting tendencies in picturing faces. As magazine writing is reduced more and more to efficiency and the clipping-away of the extraneous, the face in fiction tends to disappear altogether, as unnecessary. This process is occurring at the same time that incident,

Digitized by Google

characterization, and conversation become constantly more artistic in their verisimilitude. Drama, on the contrary, has developed a painstaking elaboration of physiognomy, not of course in the actual text, but in preface and stage direction. The practice was begun by Ibsen, but not many of us when we think of Hedda remember that "her complexion is pale and opaque. Her steel-gray eyes express an unruffled repose. Her hair is an agreeable medium brown, but not particularly abundant." Circumstantial as is this description, it does not compare for expansion, as we all know, with the detailed presentment with which Shaw seeks to prevent our imaginations from making any mistake about his *dramatis personæ:*

"The slim shapely frame, the elegant suit of new mourning, the small head and regular features, the pretty little mustache, the frank clear eyes, the wholesome bloom on the youthful complexion, the well-brushed glossy hair, not curly but of fine texture and good dark color, the arch of good nature in the eyebrows, the erect forehead and neatly pointed chin, all announce the man who will love and suffer later on."

How would Shakespeare ever have got down to the business of play-writing if before

Digitized by Google

he began he had had to do all that work for the reader's fancy? Shakespeare is something of an authority on the psychology of readers and spectators. Writers who wish to draw faces may well go to him for illumination. One wonders, for example, what Shakespeare would have thought of the influence of the movie "close-in" as affecting face-portraiture in present-day fiction. The cinema has accustomed people to contortions of passion magnified to square-yard dimensions; does this practice make readers more sensitive to the subtleties of a face exhibited only in words, or less so? Do the giant exaggerations of the screen tend to make the imagination more receptive to the novelist's miniatures, or less so?

Perhaps, after all, the inherent qualities of human fancy in its response to suggestion do not change very much from age to age. Shakespeare knew more about the reader's imagination than any man has ever known, and because he knew, he did not describe faces. The statement may elicit impetuous contradiction, for whose memory is not crowded with faces from Shakespeare? But did he draw them for us? Search his scripture and find out that he did not. Portia, Othello, Lear, Juliet — we look vainly for the lines

Digitized by Google

in which Shakespeare gives us the portraits that are our imperishable possessions. Not that Shakespeare could not have painted a face — quickly enough he sketched a Cassius when he needed him — but for the most part he knew that the greatest creators let the reader share creation. Shakespeare launched into life innumerable souls, but he let us image them for ourselves. Nor can it be urged that our sharply defined portraits have been got from stage presentation. Our conception of Hamlet is not Booth or Forbes-Robertson or Sothern, no matter how often we may have seen these actors. Our picture of Hamlet is not even Shakespeare's, scant as that is; for though we have Queen Gertrude's word that her son was fat, every one of us conceives Hamlet's soul as clothed in a rapier-like delicacy of body. Left to ourselves with the creations of romance we can improve the conditions of actual life; we can fit face to spirit in such true relation as poor breathing clay, in its clumsy caricature of soul by shape, can never do. It is the perfection of Shakespeare's portraiture that he lets us have a part in it. Even under extremest temptation he did not blur our mental image by imposing upon it his own. He painted a marvelous barge which, itself embellished by every

Digitized by Google

beauty of his fancy, carried down the Nile the most beautiful woman in history, but the woman he did not picture; he let us conceive unaided the wonders that for himself frankly beggared description.

Of all the haunting faces that circle through the fancy of a story-writer need he struggle vainly to paint any to his reader? Shakespeare's example not only disproves the necessity, but enjoins us to desist from the attempt. One other supreme story-teller proves the vanity of attempting to describe a face. The most beautiful face in all fiction has throbbed with life for three thousand years, yet only the puniest poets have ever attempted to describe it. Its creator never d d. He only told of the wondering awe of old men before that face, the face they should have hated for the ruin it brought them. Homer never described the face of Helen, and perhaps that is the reason why it has been so real a face for thirty centuries, and why every poet who came after has been free to utter his own passion for

"the starry sorrows of immortal eyes";

or for

"the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium."

Digitized by Google

FACES IN FICTION

If Homer had made finite by description the loveliness of Helen, perhaps young Kit Marlowe would never have risen to the highest praise ever given to any face by English literature.

Digitized by Google

BACKGROUND PAST AND PRESENT

MANY of us to-day have our little cures for the contemporary. When familiar creeds go crashing, and the daily foundations of our feet quake and rumble, we have our avenues of escape. Birds and books and babies are not yet infected with Bolshevism. Despite the portentous problems that oppress us, spring still pipes gayly through the greenwood and youngsters make merry with the violets. But while nature is still reassuring, that other familiar refuge, a book, has become an insecure retreat. A novel used to be a method of splendid forgetting, but to-day we have reason to complain that most of the people in contemporary fiction are unreal. They do not move with human abandon; they are puppets by which we refuse to be duped, much as we yearn for the release of romance.

Probably the novelist is as conscious of his inadequate portraiture as we are. It is not his fault if both his own hand and the characters he depicts lack the large, free gesture of older days. The real trouble is that to-day both artist and picture have no stable back-

Digitized by Google

ground. We know how hard it is to distinguish the movement of a train except by reference to stationary objects. Fielding and Thackeray drew men in action against the static landscape of an accepted social order. The present prevalence of earthquake both weakens the artist's hand and in any faithful picture of the times confounds the movements of the actor with the movements of the scenery, so that we cannot focus attention on him, being preoccupied with observing the roof about to collapse upon his head. Both in fact and in fiction background has become intrusive, so that by its engrossing interest it relegates the people in the drama to mere automata. No wonder that the old gusto of loving or hating an imaginary person has become impossible for either author or reader.

In earlier novels fiction-shapes stood out boldly against the surrounding stability; their actions and reactions showed forth vigorous and impressive. The background of any story may be resolved into several elements, each forming part of the foundation upon which fiction folk live and move and have their being. Of these foundation elements, actual place, with all its power to shape personality and to suggest atmosphere, is prominent. No less important is the period depicted, com-

Digitized by Google

prising the social conditions governing the career of any individual; the common work-aday creed and convention of his time and his town must show forth as affecting a hero's behavior. These elements of background can be instantly recognized if one remembers the painstaking attention to each shown in Bennett's "Old Wives' Tale." Another part of background is less visible, namely, the writer's own philosophy of life, which consciously or unconsciously supplies the structure of selection beneath the external setting. Yet how is a story-teller to-day to find a stage-scene secure enough for contrast with a character's emotions and actions? Revolt has always been a fertile theme for fiction, but in a revolutionary period you cannot discover any condition solid enough for any one to rebel against. You could not to-day emphasize a man's atheism, as once in Edna Lyall's "Donovan"; too few men are sure of God. You could not emphasize a woman's divorce; too many women are divorced. You cannot depict revolt against any convention unless it is securely established.

Perhaps it is impossible to have confident and convincing protrayal of character when all the background of faiths and customs is being tossed and tested both for people in

Digitized by Google

novels and for people out of them. Yet we who would find some poise in a reeling universe still hunger for the peace that is due us from books. A sharp line of cleavage may be observed to-day between readers who are so intrigued by the enigmas of the present that they cannot read any books of the past, and readers who are so oppressed by these same enigmas of the present that they cannot read any *but* books of the past. Susceptibility to background is the essence of both attitudes; the first that of people repelled by the smug security of former fiction, and the second that of people helpless with hysteria before our own volcanic present. For both classes no saner means of orientation is to be found than the attentive study of the background of earlier novels. With a sure instinct for equipoise, many a doughboy in his dugout demanded a deep draught of Dickens; we who are called on to hold the bewildering Front Line of Reconstruction should have the same brave detachment and sane appreciation. Both the readers and the writers of novels will return to a contemplation of real life with surer self-security after they have walked for a while along the unhurried farm-lands of George Eliot, or in the little villages of Jane Austen, impregnable in provincialism.

Digitized by Google

In view of their conscientious attention to social and economic questions, it is perhaps unkind to say to many present-day novelists that a novel should deal primarily with persons, not with problems. If you are to portray characters that shall seem alive, you must subdue background to its proper subordinate function, you must impress enough firmness upon your landscape to contrast clearly with the action of your people. To attain this trick of seeming security when the actual contemporary scene is heaving, is a hard task for any story-teller. One way of success is by emphasizing those elements of background that are less subject to disturbance than the others. Specific place can be made so prominent that the actuality of mountain and moor may offset the flux of creeds and conventions unescapable in a transitional era. This is the supreme achievement of Thomas Hardy. His characters move across the pages with compelling vitality, not because either he or they possess the old security of faiths and codes unquestioned by Fielding and Smollett, but because their actions are silhouetted against the brooding immobility of Exmoor.

Another element of background that may be intensified to give the requisite of realism is harder to attain. The personal philosophy

Digitized by Google

of the writer may supply security to the stage structure of his drama. This framework may be invisible to the reader's eye. Even the artist himself may not be fully conscious that he is employing it, and yet it will prove to be his own conception of the eternal scheme of things that establishes the perspective of his picture and gives it coherence. Just in so far as a novelist's own faith is sanguine and constructive rather than inchoate, will the background of his book appear to have solidity.

The requisite of a serene philosophy is today equally difficult for novelist and reader. Yet both might gain peace and poise by a glance at the backgrounds of past fiction and of present fact. The earth under our feet is perhaps far firmer than we perceive. There have been volcanoes before, but when the lava cooled, braver cities were built on buried ones. Creeds and customs slough their old externalities only to attain more vigorous new growth. At many a time before in history must the background of life have seemed to contemporary actors menacing to all tradition and to all confident behavior. Yet never yet has the sky that roofs all our faiths fallen on us, nor the earth that gives seed-space to our hopes been consumed. All the structures of custom built by progress have

Digitized by Google

been preserved just so long as people have kept them sanitary. When the house of habit appears to be toppling, it does not call for panic, but for sturdier beams. One conceives one's background as ready made for one's entrance upon the stage; if the scenery quakes and threatens or even bruises by unexpected impacts, one thinks this not one's fault but one's fate. Yet perhaps there never was any period, however chaotic, when a man's background was not chiefly of his own making.

Digitized by Google

A PORTRAIT FOR THE CONTEMPORARY

BY way of escape from the contemporary may one advise spending a week-end in eternity with Anne Elliot? One returns from "Persuasion" to the crashing surges of the present, calmed by the company of a woman who was anchored. One finds that Anne Elliot's serenity preserves one from the buffetings of a world crisis as successfully as it solaced Anne herself for daily fret; for her personal and private existence was in itself a shabby affair. Jane Austen seems to have taken positive pleasure in portraying a clever, tender, capable woman in surroundings superlatively dull and distasteful and loveless. Being twenty-seven, Anne belonged to that class of respectable outcasts scorned by her generation — she was an old maid. She was despised by her family as well as by her generation. It is not cheerful to possess a father who does not like your looks, and a sister who has every reason to be satisfied with hers. While it is depressing to have your relatives too blind to respect you, it is even more depressing to be yourself too intelligent to re-

Digitized by Google

spect them. It is not conducive to complacency to have had a lover and lost him. Yet the nicest thing about Anne Elliot is that you can't pity her.

Unobtrusively, yet securely, Anne is on top of her circumstances, however much her circumstances may batter and bother her, and the reasons for her security are simple to find. She was a reader, not wide but deep, capable of sailing far from self in a book. She loved out-of-doors in a real intimacy; when fathers and sisters were too futile and fussy, she could slip off and be the friend of the trees. The shell of self fell from her easily, so that she was a serviceable body whom people imposed upon, and thus she had a good many lives to live in beside her own.

So far Anne Elliot's anchored steadfastness is comprehensible. Books and sky and people are an inalienable refuge from the petty and personal, but the petty and personal could not have been Anne's only trouble, just as to-day they do not comprise any one's chief obstacle to calm. For years a world war had rocked Anne Elliot's universe even as it lately rocked ours, and the being she loved best in all the world had been constantly exposed to war's nameless perils. Anne was a woman well-informed and sensitive, and yet one may

Digitized by Google

be intimate with her and with her author from cover to cover of books eternal in their humanity, and yet not so much as guess there had ever been a Waterloo. Women sent their men to war in those days, but how many women, or men either, knew what the war was about? A hundred years have wrought miracles in that to-day we think in world thoughts, are moved by world movements, and throb to world emotions.

Yet shall any one undervalue Anne Elliot's service to the world because she seems to limit her interests to so small a part of it? Anne Elliot belongs with those women who are always better for their background, who need their setting, who belong in houses old enough to have shaped themselves to their owners, women who love the old gardens handed down to their tending. One reason for the sense of repose such women give is that we know them rooted to gentle old places, familiar with mellow walls and perennial flower-beds. Anne was a home-lover, a home-maker. It is true that we meet her just as she is leaving her old home, and we part from her before she has made herself a new one, but all the time we see her slipping in and out of other people's homes, by her presence evoking the inherent coziness and content that

Digitized by Google

without her would not have been perceived. She lived in other people's lives because her own was too lonely to live in. In her circle Anne was everybody's aunt, a relation much more sympathetic, because less proprietary, than being everybody's mother.

As a recent novelist describes a heroine as "not aggressively married," so one might describe Anne Elliot as not aggressively *un*-married. Any man could, and did, tell her his troubles without being afraid she would fall in love with him. Rarely — not more than two or three times in the book — does any man stop talking about himself long enough to look into his listener, and to wonder what are his secret-sharer's own secrets. Yet Anne can talk when other people will let her, drawing on deep funds of observation and of wisdom. She has the gift of understanding herself without pitying herself, and more than that, the gift of being as tolerantly amused at herself as at other people. She has the charm of a reserve which attracts friendship, but which friendship does not even wish to disturb. She is a woman fathomless in the profundity of her peace. She is a subtle woman wise enough to be simple.

Anne Elliot and Jane Austen were both women big enough to live in world terms if

Digitized by Google

they had wanted to, but they chose to live in littleness rather than in largeness. Yet theirs is a visioned littleness. Does any reader think the interests of author and of heroine ought to have been in 1814 a good deal nearer the battle-front of contemporary history? Is it being insensitive to the world's distress if one tries to-day to build more securely than ever a citadel of peace in one's own soul, bulwarking it with the beauty of every common thing? Perhaps God and his world can afford to keep a few women like Anne Elliot and her creator far from the tempestuous present, women who cannot be profitably uptorn from their anchorage in calm for the benefit of any transient clash of classes. Perhaps Anne Elliot and Jane Austen are citizens of eternity, who serve all time by keeping inviolate the sanctuary of a home and a heart at peace.

Digitized by Google

VICTUALS AND DRINK IN JANE AUSTEN

HAVE you ever observed, in reading Miss Austen, how frankly and frequently people eat? They are unashamed of food, soberly putting through a full day's victualing. They breakfast none too early, for Catherine Morland on her first morning at Northanger is awakened by the sun at the cheery hour of eight; and it is a hardship worthy of note that William Price, entering on his lieutenancy, must be up and off by half-past nine. The breakfast menu is slurred over for the most part. In the leisurely breakfast-room of Northanger Abbey, that humorous old scoundrel, General Tilney, sips his cocoa and reads his newspaper. At Mansfield they breakfast on eggs and cold pork, for William and Crawford are breezily off and away, after the manner of gentlemen, leaving their cluttered plates of shells and bones for Fanny to cry over.

If breakfast is a somewhat unemphatic meal, not so the mid-morning collation, always served to visitors. These refreshments vary in kind and quality. While Miss Crawford plays away the morning, harping to

Digitized by Google

Edmund Bertram, her attendant brother-in-law assiduously plies the sandwich-tray—love is not above bread and butter. Even the indecently humble Miss Bates can offer a caller sweet cake or baked apples from the buffet. But this is mere sit-about-as-you-please refreshment; at Pemberley, the abundance of the feast calls for more decorum. The "entrance of the servants with cold meat, cake, and a variety of all the finest fruits in season," interrupts a most awkward and chilly call. Yielding up the ghost of conversation, the company cheerfully gathers around the table loaded with "beautiful pyramids of grapes, nectarines, and peaches," well worth the price of a bad half-hour.

Dinner is a meal of which the hour is not exactly determined, seeming to be shoved at pleasure to one side or the other of four o'clock. At dinner the stand-by is mutton. There is a surfeit of mutton in English literature. It is boiled mutton usually, too. Now, boiled mutton is to my mind a poor sort of dish, unsuggestive, boldly and flagrantly nourishing—a most British thing; it will never gain a foothold on the American stomach or imagination. But the Austenite must e'en eat it. Roast mutton is a different thing. You might know Emma Woodhouse would have roast

Digitized by Google

mutton rather than boiled; it is to roast mutton and rice pudding that the little Kneightleys go scampering home through the wintry weather.

The manner of serving dinner arouses some questioning. Mrs. Bennet does not invite Bingley to dinner impromptu, "for though she always kept a very good table, she did not think anything less than two courses could be good enough for a man on whom she had such anxious designs, or satisfy the appetite and pride of one who had ten thousand a year." The two-course dinner with which Jane's lover was afterward honored comprised venison, soup, partridges, and, I surmise, dessert. One queries at just what item in the menu the dinner was broken into two courses.

Dinner over and the gentlemen's wine-drinking done, the company must have tea and coffee in the drawing-room, served with substantial accompaniment of cake. Coffee would appear to have been an unfeminine thing, for it never appears in the after-dinner equipage unless there are gentlemen present. The tea function varies in formality. At ceremonious Mansfield it is ushered in by "solemn procession, headed by Baddeley, of tea-board, urn, and cake-bearers." It is all much prettier and cozier at Longbourn, where Jane

Digitized by Google

Bennet makes the tea, and Elizabeth pours the coffee.

But the most savory meal in Jane Austen is the supper that rounds off a social evening. No hungry balls for Jane Austen's doughty dancers, but draw up and sit down, all of you, and eat in earnest of cold ham and chicken, rout-cakes and ices, and if you are a frail-strung Fanny be flushed and "feverish with hopes and fears, soup and negus." These are ball-room refreshments; for utter toothsomeness commend me to a little Woodhouse supper, when the "table is set out in the drawing-room and moved forward towards the fire" — suggestive, this last. It warms the very palate to read of that minced chicken, the scalloped oysters, the apple tarts, the custard, the wine, the muffin. There is nothing niggardly about Emma Woodhouse; husbands for Harriet or food for the hungry, she is always a good provider.

Thus the day's eating. However, you must still, if you would fulfill your whole duty, sip a glass of warmed wine before you go to bed and sink into the deep slumber of the bountifully nourished.

For the most part Jane Austen treats food frankly *qua* food, aliment for aliment's sake and no bones about it, but the victualing of

Digitized by Google

character may be put to more subtle use. The fluctuations of the appetite may indicate an emotional crisis. I reckon up four notable heroines who promptly "go off their food" under amatory discomforts. Of these Marianne Dashwood is the most prominent, of course — perfectly proper of Marianne. Yet one sympathizes with Mrs. Jennings's misdirected attentions — poor Mrs. Jennings, who cannot "cure a disappointment in love by a variety of sweetmeats and olives and a good fire"! Perfidious Willoughby, to work such havoc with a young lady's digestion! Marianne Dashwood *could* not eat, but Jane Fairfax *would* not. Don't tell me she could not have choked down her mutton and saved a solicitous aunt and grandmamma much anxiety, if she had wanted to! I never did like Jane, — she was close-mouthed and contrary, and I don't believe she was nearly so pretty as Emma.

Even that buoyant child, Catherine Morland, can be laid low by love, and when reproved for some chatter about the beatific French bread of Northanger, replies from utter heights of woe, "It is all the same to me what I eat."

But the love-*versus*-nutriment motive has fullest treatment in the story of Fanny Price.

Digitized by Google

Quite early in the history of her heart we find that when miffed at her rival's attentions, this sensitive maiden, if cousin Edmund is not there to mix her bedtime wine and water, "would rather go without it than not." I am glad that Miss Austen is not above sustaining the most spirituelle of her heroines on this nightcap toddy.

To me the most agonizing scenes to which Miss Austen ever works herself up are those that picture Fanny Price's visit home. Here Miss Austen for once tries to harrow, tries to do her worst — and that worst is — disgusting food, supreme emblem and expression of the sordidness, vulgarity, and shiftlessness of the family of Price. With positive revulsion the novelist draws that nauseating picture of "the table, cut and notched by her brothers, where stood the tea-board never thoroughly cleaned, the cups and saucers wiped in streaks, the milk a mixture of motes floating in thin blue, and the bread and butter growing every minute more greasy than even Rebecca's hand had first produced it." This after the venison haunches of Mansfield! It is starvation or surrender with Fanny now, and if Crawford had not misbehaved, dear knows what might have happened! When a delicately reared heroine is reduced to a diet of baker's

Digitized by Google

buns, it is enough to drive the most faithful heart to matrimony. It must have gone hard with Miss Austen to starve a heroine, for, like Emma Woodhouse, Miss Austen is a good provider. Sometimes you might think her more careful after the stomachs of her people than after their souls — so much the better for them and for her.

Digitized by Google

THE MAN IN THE DICTIONARY

NATHANIEL BAILEY, introducing himself and his dictionary to the world in the year 1721, appends to his title-page the following advertisement: "Youth Boarded and Taught the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages in a method more Easy and Expedient than is common; also other School learning, by the *Author* of this *Dictionary*, to be heard of at Mr. Battey's, Bookseller, at the Sign of the Dove in Paternoster Row." Those were days of easy familiarity between a lexicographer and his public, when a man might turn you off a dictionary on one day and be teaching your "youth" the next. Days of pleasant littleness, those of the eighteenth century, when the world was England, and England was London, and London a clubful of little great men. Then a dictionary was a mere book written by a mere man; it had not swelled beyond the scope of a folio or two at most, or beyond the compass of a single personality.

It is true that in the impersonal wastes of Murray or the Century, the penetrating reader may sometimes chance upon what

Digitized by Google

imagination may surmise to be the flash of a person and a self, but on the whole one may say that Noah Webster was the last to leave the impress of an individuality upon the barren moors of lexicography. It was all quite otherwise in the days of Sarah More's rapture over an introduction to "Abyssinia's Johnson! Dictionary Johnson! Rambler's, Idler's, and Irene's Johnson!" For the greatest of these is Dictionary Johnson.

Johnson's Dictionary is no dull reading, whatever Becky Sharp may have thought to the contrary. From Plan and Preface straight on through the unwieldy volumes down to Z, one finds a delightful sense of the romance of words. They take life and march and move briskly under the vivacious symbolism employed in the pages of the introduction. One looks for nothing dead or dusty in a dictionary whose maker sneers at low terms as "the spawn of folly or affectation," who looks askance at "the immigrants who change their manners when they change their country," and has but a qualified welcome for the new terms of art and science, "for some of them are naturalized and incorporated, but others still continue aliens, and are rather auxiliaries than subjects." The dullest etymologist could not fail to be fired by the tramp and

Digitized by Google

surge of battle suggested by Johnson's imagery when he writes, "When I survey the plan which I have laid before you, I cannot, my Lord" (that Right Honorable Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, of equivocal fame), "but confess that I am frighted at its extent, and, like the soldiers of Cæsar, look at Britain as a new world, which it is almost madness to invade. But I hope that though I should not compleat the conquest I shall at least discover the coast, civilize part of the inhabitants and make it easier for some other adventurer to proceed farther, to reduce them wholly to subjection and settle them under laws." Poetry and patriotism are enshrined in that small paragraph, as they are in Webster's preface of 1828, for Dictionary Johnson was a patriot and a poet.

But Johnson's introduction to his great book reveals also how his pitiful inertia tugged down the poet's soarings. "Hopeless lexicography" sighs feelingly in adventuring "the boundless chaos of a living speech." The weight of the lean years of labor at 17 Gough Square oppresses the buoyant vision of the great accomplishment. Never a lazier man lived than Samuel Johnson, and never a braver worker. The reader, marching down through the alphabet side by side with John-

Digitized by Google

son, feels with him the romance of this word-conquest shadowed by the "dreams of a poet doomed at last to wake a lexicographer."

We of a different day in scholarship may have at least the good manners not to smile at Johnson's regard for his own laboriousness nor yet at the perilous superficiality of eighteenth-century research, for it is not the scholarship, but the man himself, that makes the scholar. Many a plodding etymologist of to-day might envy the ease of Johnson's "perhaps" or "I suppose." It would be a task congenial to our statistical tendencies to reckon up the occurrence of "perhaps" in Johnson's derivations. There is personality enough evidenced in those same derivations and it is characteristically expressed in the cool enunciation of the principle proclaimed in selecting the words of the dictionary: "I have omitted many because I have never read them; and many I have inserted because they may perhaps exist, though they have escaped my notice"; and also in the frank acknowledgment, "some words there are which I cannot explain because I do not understand them." There would be something racily audacious in that modern scholar who would dare to define "Isabella color" as "a kind of color," a definition commendably

Digitized by Google

stimulating to the reader's curiosity; or to dismiss "marigold" thus casually, "a yellow flower devoted, I suppose, to the Virgin." What a delightful period for the imaginative student when an unchallenged invention might suggest as the history of "gibberish," "as it was anciently written gebrish, it was probably derived from the chymical cant and originally implied the jargon of Geber and his tribe." Every one knows the famous definition of "pastern" and Johnson's reply when questioned for a reason for this signal achievement of inaccuracy, "Ignorance, madame, pure ignorance." Enviable days when a scholar was big enough to be ignorant of his own specialty.

In that primrose period of dictionary-making a lexicographer was quite untrammeled by any sense of historic grammar, and had the free use of a lusty imagination; and so far from being contemptuous, I for one own to being forever grateful for the results. There is something ticklingly risible in "me" as "a humorous expletive," illustrated by the quotation,

> "He presently, as greatness knows itself,
> Steps *me* a little higher than his vow,
> Made to my father."

An irreverent fancy suggests the flutter of

Digitized by Google

tissue skirts and the audacities of frolicsome little slippers keeping accompaniment to the solemn organ tones of the greatest Puritan when one reads under "kickshaw," "this word is supposed, I think with truth, to be only a corruption of *quelque chose*, something; yet Milton seems to have understood otherwise for he writes it kick-shoe, and seems to think it used in contempt of dancing." Doubtless Johnson's subtlety saw the incontrovertible relation between a baby and a blanket, but our feebler insight is not quite convinced by the derivation of "brat," "a child, so called in contempt. Its etymology is uncertain. Bratt in Saxon signifies a blanket, from which perhaps the modern signification may have come." Regard also the compressed tragedy in the brief history of the word "antimony": "Basil Valentine, a German monk, tried it on hogs, who fattened. Therefore he imagined his fellow monks would be the better for a like dose. The experiment, however, succeeded so ill that they all died of it, and the medicine was thenceforward called antimoine, anti-monk." There is a right Johnsonian touch under "*knuckle*, I suppose from an odd custom of striking the under side of the table with the knuckles in confession of an argumental defeat." One wagers poor Bozzy's

Digitized by Google

knuckles were rasped often, but the Doctor's never. An enchanted forest, forever barred to the circumspect huntsman after words to-day, is suggested by the word "lair"; "lai in French signifies a wild sow or a forest; the derivation is easy in either sense, or from leger, Dutch."

From time to time there flash from the lexicon-pages gleams of the personality which are as convincing as any anecdotes in Boswell and as savory of personality as those that Boswell himself selected in illustration, the list that includes the historic "oats" and "pensioner" and "lexicographer." "Giggle" is defined in a manner both restrained and caustic, "to grin with merry levity. It is still retained in Scotland"; and equally reminiscent of personal prejudice is "scelerat," a word "introduced unnecessarily from the French by a Scotch author." There is an Epicurean toothsomeness in the description of "acqua mirabilis"; "the wonderful water is prepared of cloves, cubebs, mace, cardonums, nutmegs, and spirit of wine, digested twenty-four hours, and then distilled. It is a good and agreeable cordial." The kitchen-connoisseur takes issue with the ignorant man of letters proclaiming "kettle" "a vessel in which liquor is boiled. In the kitchen the name of

Digitized by Google

pot is given to the boiler that grows narrower towards the top, and of kettle to that which grows wider. In authors these are confounded." "*Kicksy-wicksy*, a made word in ridicule and disdain of a wife," somehow recalls the wicked mimicry by which the naughty, irresistible David Garrick revealed to others the clumsy conjugal demonstrations of his former school-master, revelations known to David only by means of the keyhole. Every Johnsonian rejoices in the vehemence with which a dunce is chastised as "a dullard, a dolt, a thickskull, a stupid, indocile animal." After shuddering with Swift in the "Journal to Stella" through the evil-beset night streets of London, one is relieved by the cursory manner with which the hearty Doctor of a later time dismisses the Mohocks to the realm of imagination, for "mohock" is merely "the name of a cruel nation of America, given to ruffians who infested, or rather were imagined to infest, the streets of London." It was Johnson the man and Johnson the scholar who could phrase in such nice antithesis the meaning of "tawdry": "splendid without cost, fine without grace, shewy without elegance"; or of "lampoon"; "censure written not to reform but to vex." And the burly honesty of Johnson thunders

Digitized by Google

through the analysis of compliment as "an act or expression of civility, usually understood to include some hypocrisy or to mean less than it discloses."

Preface, plan, definition, and derivation constantly lay bare the sturdy fiber of moral purpose that runs through the book. It was a time when the scholar might turn preacher, and the preacher might turn scholar at any moment, and neither recognized any why-not about the "swift counterchange." It was partly the eighteenth-century conscience and partly the Johnsonian conscience that could appreciate so nicely the moral responsibility of a dictionary as to be studiously circumspect in the mere selections of citations. The authorities quoted must prove their eligibility to appear in the sober, God-fearing society of Johnson's definitions and derivations, for he "would not send people to look for words in a book that by such a casual seizure of the mind might chance to mislead it forever." Armed with the supreme authority of the lexicographer, Johnson does not hesitate to cast the frankest doubt and aspersion upon the names of the great, who, in spite of their eminence, may wantonly misuse a word. Milton is called to account under "lackey": "I know not whether Milton has used this word very

Digitized by Google

properly," for the careless poet has declared that "A thousand liveried angels lackey her." Shakespeare is arraigned still more roundly, and here I think one glimpses Johnson's hatred of sentimentality. The word is "ake"; "frequently applied in an improper sense to the heart; as the heart akes; to imply grief or fear. Shakespeare has used it still more licentiously of the soul." The list of authorities is not so varied but that the same names occur frequently enough for the reader to piece together citations and form an impression right or wrong of the man and the book whence the quotations derive. In introducing his volumes Johnson apologizes for the admission of some favorite name, and the frequent appearance of Goldsmith and Garrick in the dictionary would without other evidence indicate the place of those two men in the big doctor's big heart. In addition to Shakespeare, another Elizabethan contributes delightful snatches of love-making from his Arcadia as when he bequeaths the verb "ghost"; "Euryalus, taking leave of Lucretia precipitated her into such a love-fit that she ghosted." Browne's "Vulgar Errors" gives some quaint suggestive terms regrettably obsolete upon our lips to-day — that is a charmingly mouthable word of his, "bombilation," noise.

Digitized by Google

Peacham on Drawing supplies much matter not seeming to bear directly on the title of his book; for example, the interesting ethnological item that "satyrs, as Pliny testifies, were found in times past in the Eastern Mountains of India." L'Estrange is a favorite in citation, and surely both lexicographer and reader must sympathize with his trials when he complains that "it is one of the most vexatious mortifications of a studious man to have his thoughts disordered by a tedious visit." But among all the quoted, a very prince of sensationalism is one Wifeman, On Surgery. One's eye goes traveling down the columns to find and follow that vigorous practitioner to his blood-curdling clinics. The most unsuspected words reveal some scene of bone-setting or blood-letting that chills the stomach. One remembers that "knap" means "to strike so as to make a sharp noise" when the ears of fancy have heard Wifeman reduce "shoulders so soon that the standers-by heard them knap before they knew they were out." From time to time Wifeman suggests catastrophes fit for expansion by yellow journalism. One's humane curiosity is sorely tried by Wifeman's brevity when all one knows of a certain cook-maid is that she "by the fall of a jack-weight upon her head was beaten

Digitized by Google

down," or by the following item, supplied by a word seemingly so unprovocative to fancy as "bedpost," "I came the next day and placed her in a clear light, her head leaning to a bedpost, another standing behind holding it steady"; and then what happened? and what had happened before? and for what did Wifeman come prepared? We shall never know. But Johnson had Wifeman's book before him and he knew the end of every story — is there a hint of sly teasing that he cuts the reader off thus mischievously in the very midst? He was capable of so doing or I much mistake. But I do not grudge to Dictionary Johnson any facetiousness that may have spiced for him his monumental labor. For if sometimes he laughed, also and often he prayed. Prayer was such a common custom in those days that they prayed even over making a dictionary, and without the slightest apology either to the Almighty or to the public for so doing. At one time Johnson could write in ironic humor,

> "The drudgery of words the damn'd would know,
> Doomed to write lexicons in endless woe,"

and again with equal genuineness pray to the "Giver of all knowledge, enable me so to pursue the study of tongues that I may promote thy glory and my salvation."

Digitized by Google

THE MAN IN THE DICTIONARY

For a little while I have been with Johnson's Dictionary, but for that little while I am very sure that I have been with Samuel Johnson himself, and I come back to the present with regret that the world has grown so big that a man can never again put himself into a dictionary.

Digitized by Google

ROBINSON CRUSOE RE-READ

THERE is at present an irruption of desert islands upon the ocean of romance. If the words "desert island" still suggest to us the spell of Crusoe's country and of Crusoe's company, a brief consideration of his cheery solitude will reveal how deeply his character and his conduct differ from those of the shipwrecked hero of to-day.

It is surprisingly delightful to re-read "Robinson Crusoe." The charm is not merely that of happy memories revived. The book has power to hold the attention vitally, no matter how many times perused. However jaded our imagination, it is always stirred by that inert figure on the desolate shore, as it slowly wakes to realization and to action. A man set free by fate from all the conventions, all the conveniences, all the complexities of civilization, Crusoe sets to work, industriously as a baby beaver building a dam, to reëstablish all his bonds. If one is to tame a desert island, it is well to have a solid British shiphold and a solid British upbringing to begin with. Robinson Crusoe constantly employs the resources of both these in evolving his

Digitized by Google

simple cave-dwelling and his more complicated colony.

How anxiously we scuttle the ship in Crusoe's company! How momentous the decision what articles will be most necessary! With unerring perception of his needs, Crusoe selects not what will make him comfortable, but what will keep him busy. Thus he comes to possess what keeps the reader busy, also, simple tools without technicalities. The least mechanical of us can follow the manufacture of a boat made by means of an edge and an axe. It needs a little education to appreciate Cellini and his Perseus, but it needs none to appreciate Crusoe and his pottery. Clumsily and joyously we assist him while he makes his chair, his baskets, his great hairy umbrella. We are unembarrassed in the presence of a man who can say of his clay jars so patiently achieved, "as to the shapes of them they were very indifferent, as any one may suppose, when I had no way of making them but as children make dirt-pies." Perhaps there is no bond in friendship comparable to sharing the imagination that goes to the making of mud-pies. He holds our affection forever, the person who has helped us make dreams out of dirt. They are sorry fellows who, grown-up and gray, cannot still feel

Digitized by Google

the fun of sharing Crusoe's victories over nothingness.

As we yield to the spell, we hardly know whether it is Crusoe who has built his home, or we. We seem somehow to have slipped into his skin. Robinson Crusoe is boy eternal, which is one way of saying that he does not possess an individuality to interfere with the substitution of our self for his. Because Robinson Crusoe is so unobtrusive and so busy with his own domestic affairs, there is room for us upon his island, and we shall always revisit it, while we travel but once to the fancy's isles of present fiction. A shipwrecked hero to-day is no Crusoe, comfortably colorless; rather he is a man, and sometimes a woman, whose personality is so vigorous that it shoves the reader quite off the island, back into the ocean, and home again to the humdrum.

Both Crusoe's island and the desert islands of to-day exhibit the actions and reactions of a human being suddenly set loose from all the bonds of custom, a free and naked soul, left entirely to its own devices in the practice of decency and decorum. For Defoe the resultant struggle with surroundings was a purely material one, the surmounting of objective, practical difficulties; for the ro-

Digitized by Google

mancer of to-day, the struggle is one of soul with soul-stuff. The reader is embarrassed by the raw revelations of the hero's heart, as it riots without restraint under tropical influences and tropical impulses. With Crusoe, however artlessly he confides his sins to us, we are always aware of his normal self-control. Crusoe is a true Britisher in the fact that he fastens upon himself the fetters of convention when there is no law present to do so for him, and equally a Britisher in the fact that back in tight little England he felt cheerfully free to resist authority. Crusoe is always essentially a boy; his instinct toward decency is that of a wholesome boy.

Crusoe shows his youthful vitality in his respect for order both inside his own soul and outside of it. He says his prayers and makes a table and later makes a colony, convinced of the rightness of all these things. Youth is always conservative, luckily for a world of witless grown-ups. Present-day Crusoes are introduced to us freed from all restraint, and throughout their story they remain thus. Such men have no mud-pie instincts. If they make pottery, it is with the purpose to exhibit their souls in grapple with circumstance; there is no joy in the jar for itself, poor heart-harried creatures that they are. Neither is

Digitized by Google

there any delight for them in making citizens out of savages. A writer no longer finds it necessary to introduce savages into his desert; rather he lets his hero revert to savagery himself; for we of to-day are not so cock-sure as Crusoe that civilized man is superior to a savage after all. The Admirable Crichton alone, in Barrie's exquisite satire, had Crusoe's convictions of law and order, and the energy to establish an ideal community on a strictly English pattern. Shipwrecked heroes usually make no effort to reëstablish the old life from which they have been delivered; they do not believe in the good old world, so they do not try to take it again upon their shoulders; instead, they attempt the heavier burden of making a world to fit their own wills. Any boy with as much common sense as Robinson Crusoe would know better than that.

The greatest difference between Crusoe's island and our later ones is that his is subject to convention, but not to complexity. Nowadays a man is tossed on a desolate shore to wake up freed from all the external complications of social existence, but inextricably bound by the complications of his own character. There is a yet subtler and sorrier circumstance which distinguishes the contem-

Digitized by Google

porary wilderness from Crusoe's. The novelist of to-day does not dare to do without a lady. In this respect Defoe and Crusoe had the courage of their convictions. Theirs is a sexless world. True, Robinson Crusoe gets him a wife in good time, but she is merely a proper middle-class convention, and no clogging soul-mate, and besides he disposes of her promptly with no prodigal waste of emotion. Crusoe, even up to seventy years, continues essentially a boy and a celibate. Now the trouble with our later desert islands for grown-ups is that they are not desert at all, for there is always a woman on them. Whether the shipwrecked hero remains on his island or is rescued, the fate that was washed up with him never afterwards relinquishes him. Happy Crusoe, whose privacy was invaded merely by cannibals, conventional cannibals needing only conventional treatment, but whose soul was never attacked by that greatest modern complexity, not amenable to any conventional treatment — woman!

Digitized by Google

SHAKESPEARE ON THE SERVANT PROBLEM

ONE thing that makes the world of Shakespeare such a pleasant place for the imagination to inhabit is the absence there-of many small frictions that fret our own day. "The spacious time of great Elizabeth" had no servant problem. We should miss from Shakespearean drama some of its most delightful scenes if the terms "master and man," "mistress and maid," were not as unquestioned as the relation they imply. Outrageous fate may beset hero and heroine, but there is always somebody to cook for them and to brush their clothes; tragedy is cushioned by the constancy of hands always ready to solace the body of the sufferer, and of hearts, however humble, faithful unto death.

The servitor's own prerogatives are as enviable as his superior's. People may be poor, but who so poor as not to have mistress or master to provide lodging and food and a jealous protection? Yet for Shakespeare servants are servants — the social life he portrays is rollicking with good-fellowship, and yet

Digitized by Google

rigid with caste. Whatever its restrictions domestic service in Shakespeare's time had advantages that might go far toward solving the problem of domestic service to-day. It had for one thing the comfort of abundant companionship. It is at a merely middle-class door that Dromio of Ephesus knocks when he calls upon his fellow servants to let him in, "Maud, Bridget, Marian, Cicely, Gillian, Ginn." Six maids to answer the door-bell represents a merely normal retinue, as does Miranda's nursery equipment:

Miranda. Had I not four or five women to attend on me?

Prospero. Thou hadst, and more, Miranda.

In the emergency of entertaining, a much larger quota was demanded. One sees old Capulet dispatching one servant to invite the wedding guests, and in the same breath speeding another,

"Sirrah, go hire me twenty cunning cooks";

and yet the poor man frets,

"We shall be much unfurnished for this time."

In this crowded companionship of the servants' quarters Shakespeare reveals to us a merry little world revolving in sub-plot passages far below the burdened tread of his tragedy or the romantic dance of his comedy.

Digitized by Google

One could not help commending Sir Toby Belch's preference for the jollity of the servants' hall to the companionship of a love-sick if high-born niece. That pleasant place, with its pranks and plots, its quick wit and song and capering dance, gives us the most unforgettable of all those pictures of below-stairs in which English literature is so rich. In the servants' quarters of Shakespearean scenes food and fun and smart livery are always in plenty. Shylock alone is niggardly of these, dismissing Launcelot to his new master with the warning,

> "Thou shalt not gormandise;
> As thou hast done with me: . . .
> And sleep and snore, and rend apparel out."

People well fed, well housed, well clothed and companioned, were also never so overworked that their feet could not trip in a dance, nor so subdued that they could not troll a catch at any moment.

True they have their little failings. They get delightfully drunk. They are past-masters in extracting tips. They are often sycophantic in studying the master's mood for the sake of their own advantage. They enjoy a freedom of speech that makes us gasp. Mistress and master rarely go the way either of silliness or of sin unrebuked. A Shakespearean

Digitized by Google

servant tells his master what he thinks of him, and possibly this privilege might be considered worth the price of any servitude.

Employers, of course, have their rights, and they are very different from their rights of to-day, for the whip is common, but dismissal rare. It was a robust age, and hands and heads were used to cuffing. However quick with chastisement a master may be, he is equally quick to resent any violence done to his servant by another. Any dishonor shown to an underling is by all the social code considered as dishonor intended for the master, and on this hypothesis the latter may always be depended upon to act.

The confidence a servant may have in his master's championship is equaled by the confidence a master may have in a servant's honesty. It goes without question that a lackey should carry his master's purse. In the "Two Gentlemen of Verona," Julia shows an all-inclusive confidence in her Abigail when she declares,

> "All that is mine I leave at thy dispose,
> My goods, my lands, my reputation."

The family servant is always the chief of counselors. Juliet's renunciation of the nurse's advice for her own initiative is a significant

Digitized by Google

sign of her sudden growing-up. Julia, debating a hazardous course, appeals to her maid:

> "Counsel, Lucetta, gentle girl: assist me;
> And even in kind love I do conjure thee,
> Who art the table wherein all my thoughts
> Are visibly charactered and engraved,
> To lesson me and tell me some good mean
> How, with my honor, I may undertake
> A journey to my loving Proteus."

In these crises it seems to be the part of the maid first in all honesty to recommend a rational plan to her deluded mistress, and having thus done to assist with loyal duplicity the romantic course embarked upon.

A servant yields freedom of action only thus far, that he will, protesting, assist in foolishness, but will never acquiesce in crime. Lady Macbeth's attendant is tender with pity, not hostile with revulsion. Pisanio, charged by his master to do a dastardly deed, disobeys with the dominant motive of thus doing better service to his misguided lord. As Shakespeare saw it, the responsibility of servant to superior demanded a personal nobility as great as that demanded by the responsibility of superior to servant.

As one thinks of the various households of Shakespearean drama, one recognizes at once certain types of Elizabethan domestics, as

Digitized by Google

well as certain salient individuals. The office of steward must have been an anomalous and ungrateful one. Shakespeare makes its representatives unattractive. The most prepossessing is the least formal, Justice Shallow's Davy. Davy reveals the reason for the steward's unpopularity with his own servants' hall as plainly as does Fabian in accounting for his dislike of Malvolio — "You know he brought me out of favor with my lady about a bear-baiting here." A steward does not seem to be allowed any direct means of punishment; he can but report delinquencies. His power depends entirely on his influence with his superior. Davy is not slow to use his, when he frankly begs the justice's lenience toward a friend in the dock:

> "I have served your worship truly, sir, these eight years, and if I cannot once or twice in a quarter bear out a knave against an honest man, I have little credit with your worship. The knave is mine honest friend, sir: therefore, I beseech you, let him be countenanced."

That a steward was neither master nor man shows clearest in Malvolio, both in the resentment of his fellows, and in the fact that he alone, of the long Shakespearean retinue, exhibits a desire, significantly punished, to rise above his station.

The most frequent type of underling to be

Digitized by Google

met on the Shakespearean stage is the page, with his grace, his charm, his youth, his rattling wit. The manners expected of a page are best revealed by the requirements recognized when maidens assume the disguise. Rosalind delights in "a swashing and martial outside." Imogen is directed to change

> "fear and niceness
>
> . . . . . .
>
> . . . into a waggish courage;
> Ready in gibes, quick-answered, saucy and
> As quarrelous as the weasel."

To please his patron the page must have not only a quick tongue, but a musical one. Viola's chief recommendation to Orsino's service is that she

> "can sing
> And speak to him in many sorts of music
> That will allow me very worth his service."

By far the tenderest portrait of a page is that of Lucius, Brutus's boy-servitor, as, weary but still faithfully trying to sing and soothe his master, he nods to sleep in that haunted midnight tent.

The pathos of Lucius's youth contrasted with the tragedy it yearns to lighten reminds us of another lad, also faithful to the end, the young fool in "Lear." Sadder than any singing are the quips of his brave young lips.

Digitized by Google

Lear's fool is true to the last to the conventions of his calling. Of all other types of Shakespearean servant we can find examples of survival to-day, but not of the fool. No matter how large a retinue a modern household may possess, the jester is never considered a necessary luxury. His place to-day is perhaps taken by the comic supplement.

Of all human types to be met either in literature or in life there is none on which the memory dwells more wistfully than on that of the old family servant. Shakespeare gives us two signal examples, Orlando's Adam and Juliet's nurse. One remembers that the part of the faithful old man was one that Shakespeare himself liked to act. It is amusing to note that even in Orlando's day there was the same outcry against changing fashions, and a harking back to a golden age of devotion:

> "O good old man, how well in thee appears
> The constant service of the antique world,
> When service sweat for duty, not for need!
> Thou art not for the fashion of these times
> Where none will sweat but for promotion,
> And having that, do choke their service up
> Even with the having."

Juliet's nurse, with her vulgar mind, her garrulous tongue, her petty tyranny, her petty dignity, her hearty humor, and her great

Digitized by Google

love, is a figure as familiar for its comedy as her mistress's for its tragedy. As one of Orlando's most attractive qualities is his tenderness for Adam, so one of Juliet's is her patience with her nurse. Both boy and girl show clearly that consideration for the old servant is part of the code of manners and morals embodied in an Elizabethan education. Juliet's nurse is a member of that readily recognizable group of Shakespearean ladies-in-waiting, Julia's Lucetta, Olivia's Maria, Desdemona's Emilia, Portia's Nerissa. More than other domestics, the lady's-maid shows by her complete identification with the household and her friendship with all its guests the social solidarity of an Elizabethan *ménage*.

As one studies the servants in Shakespeare's plays, one recognizes the rigidity of the Elizabethan caste system, but recognizes as clearly its externality. Superficially master and man belong to different ranks; fundamentally they belong to only one. Did Shakespeare perceive that the solving, not alone of the servant problem, but of all social problems, lies in the human, the personal relation? Shakespeare and Elizabethan England, for all their aristocratic trappings, were profoundly democratic. They believed that it was perfectly possible for the servant to be a better man than his

Digitized by Google

lord, and in a society thus believing what man or woman would mind being a servant? Shakespeare never denied a servant all the rights due to personality. If one had lived in those days one would have had good reason to choose, as Shakespeare on his stage chose, a servant's part. He has portrayed no gentler gentleman than Adam. In Shakespearean England there are bad masters and bad servants, but no class hostility. Shakespeare and his England were too wise for that, and too human.

Digitized by Google

A BOY IN A BOOK

A SIXTH reading of the "Egoist" has but renewed for me, I find, my first delight in a radiant little personality, namely, that most engaging of small boys, young Crossjay Patterne. He flashes from Meredith's pages, all sun-warmed and healthy, tonicy as a sharp breeze, swift on the wing as a bird, and trusty as a baby oak sprouting from wholesome English soil. Mischievous little scapegrace that he is, Crossjay is a very nursling of old Nature herself, and Meredith makes us feel for him a grown-up's reverence before the mystery of growth. The blossoming of his funny little plans and purposes comes to have the sacredness and wonder of springing leaves or bird wings that lift skyward. Willoughby's influence on others never shows so sinister as when it threatens to pervert the sweet and rosy sanity of the little lad, and never does the vesture Willoughby was weaving for himself, industriously as Andersen's demon-tailors wove the Emperor's new clothes, show as so pitiful a disguise as when we see the soul within through Crossjay's keen young vision.

Digitized by Google

Never a youngster came dancing into a book with a more instant charm than Crossjay, this "boy of twelve, with the sprights of twelve boys in him"; this "rosy-cheeked, round-bodied rogue of a boy, who fell upon meats and puddings and defeated them, with a captivating simplicity in his confession that he had never had enough to eat in his life." In the instant we meet Crossjay, strange things are happening to our staled ears and eyes. In a trice we are off and away with him where wandering lanes cajole our runaway feet, where clear bird-calls tease us to essay the wind-rocked nests, where quaint flowers to be gathered for a lovely lady lurk in unexplored hollows, where sweeps of dewy lawn sparkle in the first sun and a keen race makes us tingle after the shock of the early dip in the lake; and then the taste upon our tongues of Crossjay's breakfasts afterward — "rashers of curly fat bacon and sweetly smoking coffee; toast; hot cakes, marmalade and damson-jam"! And even as he guzzled in the housekeeper's room, just beyond the window there still stretched the world of wonders compelling truancy, and also, in mistier distance, a world of fighting ships and brave men, such as Lord Nelson and one's father. No wonder that like the others who loved

Digitized by Google

him we are eager to pack him off to school, away from Patterne Hall, lest any tips from a noble kinsman, of crown-pieces or corroding flattery, should dim Crossjay's "fresh young sense of sweet."

Crossjay's charm for us is so great that we need no other explanation of the sway he unconsciously exercised over people and over plot. Examine the mechanism of this last and you will find the youngster to be of pivotal importance. Two ladies stipulate fair treatment of the penniless little scapegrace as the condition of their accepting a noble gentleman's hand; from beginning to end Crossjay's name labels the issue between Willoughby and Clara, between Lætitia and Willoughby; Vernon wins a runaway maiden back to prison at Patterne Hall all for Crossjay's sake; and whose eavesdropping but Crossjay's, involuntary as that of a drowsy kitten, betrays to the world Sir Willoughby Patterne's crucial treason?

In his relations to the other persons in the novel, Crossjay is one of those touchstone characters who bring out the best or worst in everybody. At his entrance, Letty Dale's pallid life, Vernon's meager one, are quickened to energy and courage. What had been a negative unselfishness in both is vitalized

Digitized by Google

to a parental intensity. And as for Crossjay and Clara, what sunnier pictures in all Meredith's prose or poetry than the two skimming the green lawns in a race, or poised hand in hand beneath the blossoming cherry-tree — so young, so young, the two of them! There was as much of pure boy in the "dainty rogue" as there was in Rosalind. There is a hint of fairy poetry in Clara's relations with Crossjay, there is all the woodland whimsiness of Puck in the way the boy and girl dart out upon each other from green covert. Of all the stanch knights sent forth of Heaven to succor sweet ladies in peril, none ever carried truer message of safety and hope than little Crossjay did to Clara. After a racking night the clear morning voice of Crossjay floats up to her window, "Oh, the dear voice! woodpecker and thrush in one. He never ceased to chatter to Vernon Whitford walking beside him with a swinging stride off to the lake for their morning swim. Happy couple! The morning gave them both a freshness and innocence above human. They seemed to Clara made of morning air and clear lake water. . . . She felt like one vainly trying to fly in hearing him; she felt old. The consolation she arrived at was to feel maternal. She wished to hug the boy."

Digitized by Google

The apprehensiveness with which Clara clings to Crossjay as a chaperon would have melted a less stern heart than Sir Willoughby's, but it merely irritates the courtly baronet as much as it puzzles Captain de Craye. Bewildering it must have been to these gentlemen to discover that a fair lady could love a little boy better than either of their captivating selves; but then this little boy was Crossjay. There is abundant humor in Crossjay's offices as a chaperon, as effective as they were unwitting, for if the blundering urchin had been a matchmaker as astute as beneficent could he have mated people better than he did? For Crossjay did it all.

It is by their relations to Crossjay that the contrast between Vernon and Willoughby is revealed to Clara: Vernon, the Spartan taskmaster, resolute to hold a slippery truant to his books despite a broken head; Vernon, no less tender than stern in his reverence before the small growing thing entrusted to his tending; selfless and fine in his endeavor to intensify the natural impulses of the boy's brave inheritance to a sturdy ideal of service and of dauntless patriotism; and Willoughby, by contrast, is at first engaging in his graceful playing with the boy, until that very playing to Clara's accusing eyes becomes sinister in

Digitized by Google

its influence toward idleness and irresponsibility, and the blight of Willoughby's conversation with the boy shows in all its ugliness when Crossjay says, "'Naval officers are not like Sir Willoughby.'

"'No, they are not,' said Clara; 'they give their lives to their country.'

"'And then they're dead,' said Crossjay.

"Clara wished Sir Willoughby were confronting her, she could have spoken."

Crossjay Patterne is the most complete study of a child in Meredith's novels, and as such, best exemplifies the two attributes Meredith accords to youth, in his analysis of childhood and adolescence, the innate goodness and the innate insight of boys and girls. Provided a youngster comes of good stock he had much better be left to do his own growing. The child may do a little experimenting, but on the whole his appetite may be trusted to find healthy food both material and moral. Plenty of sun and air and exercise for body and brain, and then, as you value your own soul and his, let the boy alone! Meredith never varies in the opinion that for healthy growth school is a better place than home, for the impartiality of discipline allows some privacy to the sprouting soul, and no im-

Digitized by Google

pertinent grown-ups are always pulling it up by the roots for family inspection. Meredith brings his boys and girls into the world sound and sane, and the schoolmaster is the person he most trusts to keep them so. Through Lætitia's lips he protests against home influence for Crossjay; "He is in too strong a light, his feelings and his moral nature are over-excited." In Meredith we never feel the fate of inheritance, but nobody ever made us feel so sharply the fate of influence. The blight of Willoughby's shadow might have darkened to the tragedy of Sir Austin's upon Richard, but for our Crossjay the shadow passes, though not without our shudder at the thought of the other boy. Meredith's optimism fixes our attention on the sacredness of pliability. The grown-up should be the gardener with responsibility of pruning-knife and watering-pot, but far more with reverence before the mystery of growing things, sprouting from secret depths old as earth and human nature, and rising to unknown expansion.

It is the saving grace of Crossjay that makes the "Egoist" an optimist's book and not a cynic's. It is a mark of Meredith's wholesomeness that throughout the book he makes a child's point of view the criterion of

Digitized by Google

judgment. From the first Crossjay sees straight into the heart of men and women and things, and his shrewd little comments are a racy delight. Crossjay has the sure child-insight in which Meredith believes, has as direct a vision as Sandra Belloni, also at her entrance a child, and as Sandra is an excellent foil for the mawkishness of the Poles, so is Crossjay a foil for the selfishness of Willoughby. It was a child who caused the undoing of the Emperor, naked in his invisible raiment, and at the last it is before a child's true eyes that Willoughby must cringe shivering in his rent disguise. But beneath the child's eyes that saw to the inmost, Sir Willoughby still marched bravely on to matrimony. The Emperor, also, strutted the procession through; doubtless the Emperor, too, like Sir Willoughby, "had a leg."

As a contrast to the stunted, abortive growth Sir Willoughby Patterne had made of the English manhood that was his inheritance, Crossjay's upspringing youth holds our hope. We do not need Dr. Corney to point to the boy as the true heir of the sturdy Patterne stock. Having seen the malignity of Sir Willoughby's influence removed from the boy's clear future, we wave the urchin farewell as he is haled schoolward, confident

Digitized by Google

with Dr. Corney that "this boy, young Squire Crossjay, is a good stiff hearty kind of a Saxon boy, out of whom you may cut as gallant a fellow as ever wore epaulettes."

Digitized by Google

AMERICANIZATION AND WALT WHITMAN

AMERICANIZATION is a word now frequent in print and on our tongues. The past five years have waked us abruptly to the fact that our cherished melting-pot has in many instances conspicuously failed to fuse, and with laudable energy but lamentable precipitancy we have rushed to find remedies. Suggestions for the speediest possible making of an alien into an American are crowded upon legislators and educators. It is no lack of patriotism, but quite the contrary, that makes the more thoughtful pause for a moment of self-question, as to what are these American ideals which we are so eager to teach to our immigrants. The American spirit does not seem so easy to label when one tries to translate it into curricula or laws. Love of country is as sensitive an emotion to expose to methods of efficiency as love of God. Humbly one wonders how so beautiful a thing as the spirit of America, that spirit for which once our fathers and lately our sons have died, is to be transmitted to the ignorant

Digitized by Google

and down-trodden who seek our shores of promise. It is the priceless gift we would bestow with adoption, but the actual details of how to give it make one look about helplessly for a textbook, make one ponder how to equip teachers to impart so sacred a study.

In a recent "Atlantic" appeared an article entitled "What America Means to an Englishwoman." One pregnant paragraph gives a reader pause: "If you ask me what is essentially American and *could* not have been born anywhere else, I can only think of 'The Education of Henry Adams,' the 'Introduction' to Victor Chapman's 'Letters,' and Walt Whitman, the Rodin of poetry." The juxtaposition of names is provocative, but there is no reader who would not agree that the last is preëminent in expressing what America means to an American. Poet and prophet and patriot, Whitman is still the supreme spokesman of American democracy. To many of us the poems of Whitman have taught more than we could ever otherwise have known of our own patriotism; and because of their proved inspiration to Americans, they are perhaps best fitted to embody for an alien the spirit of his new country. This is far from saying that Whitman is not too

Digitized by Google

strong a draught to be offered untransmuted to a foreigner, but there is no book so well fitted to clarify and vivify for the teacher of Americanization his own ideals.

The mere name Walt Whitman brings an instant exhilaration like the sudden sight of the Stars and Stripes billowing on the breeze. Like the flag his name connotes space, for his descriptions touch as vast and varied a territory as that over which the flag floats. Pride of place is a foundation element in patriotism, the one that constrains it to take certain individual forms of expression in national character and action and literature. The Swiss is moulded by his mountains, the Hollander by his dikes, the Norwegian by his mysterious dark and daylight; the American, if he is to be true inheritor of the land that has been given him, needs to tune his soul to wide spaces, unchained cataracts, limitless prairie, and to cities seething with incredible energy. There is no poet but Whitman fitted to be the poet of *all* these United States. His song cannot be chained to any one locality. His pictures flash on us reminiscence from the Adirondacks to Florida, from his busy Manhattan to California. We too need to be spacious people like Whitman if we are to be worthy heirs, so that we can say with him:

Digitized by Google

"I inhale great draughts of space;
The east and the west are mine, and the north
and the south are mine."

Genuine patriotism is always expressive of place in no vague, but in most specific correspondence of national character to national geography. Not only should vastness and variety somehow translate themselves into our national qualities, but we should reflect in our energy some of the limitless resources and fecundity of our land. No poet has celebrated this native energy with more inspiration for our efforts than Whitman. His farm scenes are always busy; "the song of the broad axe" rings through his forests; cities and factories teem with life. There is no remoteness of reverie about this poet of a pioneer people. He celebrates always a tireless activity. Yet American energy as Whitman expresses it is never fevered, but always purposeful. Voicing ideals for industry that we should like to cherish and, in spite of his sturdy realism, suppressing that sordidness of toil which we should like to annul, Whitman always paints work as joyous. For him the singing man had not vanished — perhaps Whitman's own singing, if only we listen, may some day bring him back, as Whitman knew him:

Digitized by Google

"I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear;
Those of mechanics — each singing his, as it should be,
blithe and strong."

Always Whitman viewed the vitality of America as essentially a pioneer vitality, the health and courage and force of men brave enough to build a new world. In Whitman's lifetime he saw this pioneer activity chiefly applied to actual frontier conditions, but his vision reached into the future and imaged other frontiers for his nation to adventure. It is significant for us to-day that his clarion call to courage, "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" should be placed under the general heading of "Marches Now the War is Over." To-day, when the world is again breathless and spent over this latest war for freedom, we need again Whitman's ringing incentive:

"Have the elder races halted?
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied
over there, beyond the seas?
We take up the task eternal, and the burden,
and the lesson,
Pioneers! O pioneers!"

Above all other American ideals for which we may turn to Whitman to find expression and reinforcement of our own conviction, a catholic breadth of hospitality is paramount. The United States is an entity fused from

Digitized by Google

myriad nations to each of which each of us owes something. No land ever befriended the foreigner so generously as ours, and the grace of that sympathy is something we must hold fast if we are to be worthy of the sacred trust of transmitting the soul of America to the soul of the stranger. Because within these last tragic years there has been sporadic abuse of our welcome, we must not forget that the loyal have outnumbered the traitorous a thousand to one. We need to turn to Whitman that we may more surely recall our clearer motives before the heat and hatred of a world war. Whitman, too, was fresh from a conflict where cruelty and oppression had almost prevailed, but his sympathy was not abated. If some of the strangers within our gates have failed us, others by the thousands have braved death to vindicate the ideals of our United States — and theirs. To these and to others of their kind we owe all that we long to bestow under the complex and subtle term "Americanization." There was no man of whatever race or color or country that Whitman's sympathy could not have found a way to reach:

"This moment yearning and thoughtful, sitting alone,
It seems to me there are other men in other lands, yearning and thoughtful;
It seems to me I can look over and behold them, in

Digitized by Google

Germany, Italy, France, Spain — or far, far
away, in China, or in Russia or India — talking
other dialects;
And it seems to me if I could know those men, I should
become attached to them, as I do to men in my
own lands;
O, I know we should be brethren and lovers,
I know I should be happy with them."

Of all the pioneer adventure that Whitman coveted for his countrymen there was none dearer to him than the difficult and daring adventure of brotherhood:

"I will establish in the Mannahatta, and in every city
of these States, inland and seaboard,
And in the fields and woods, and above every keel, little
or large, that dents the water,
Without edifices, or rules, or trustees, or any argument,
The institution of the dear love of comrades."

Over and over again, Whitman's poems affirm the New-World welcome to the Old-World immigrant:

"All you continentals of Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia,
indifferent of place!
All you on the numberless islands of the archipelagoes
of the sea!
And you of centuries hence, when you listen to me!
And you, each and everywhere, whom I specify not, but
include just the same!
Health to you! Good-will to you all — from me and
America sent."

Digitized by Google

WALT WHITMAN, AMERICAN

For the teacher humble enough to feel that he himself needs instruction before he shall presume to teach Americanization, there is no nobler textbook than the poems of Whitman. If only we can breathe his inspiration deeply enough, we may safely leave all the details of its application to American efficiency. More simply stated, if we can succeed in being as good Americans as was Walt Whitman, we shall know how to make good Americans of other people.

Digitized by Google

POETRY BY THE PENNYWORTH

FOR SALE — Beautiful poems, 35 titles, all new, 35¢. Peter Wilson, Junior, R.F.D. 3, White Mount, Georgia."

For some weeks this item, persistently recurrent in my home-paper advertising columns, has cheered my heart, for I perceive that there are others who, like me, regard poetry as a commodity worth purchasing. I am comforted also to observe that poems may still be had cheap; the price of singing has not gone up with the price of living; where could one buy thirty-five eggs, "all new," for thirty-five cents? But when the generous "Junior" named his price, did he regard himself as a giver or a getter? Exactly how does a Parnassian reckon his worth in dollars and cents to a Philistine public?

The relation between a poem and a penny needs subtle arithmetic on a poet's part, as also it demands some canny ciphering on the part of the purchaser. A certain present-day poet was once accustomed to leave to the buyer's conscience the amount due him. I do not know whether this poet still trudges highway and byway as once he did, offering to

Digitized by Google

sing his rhymes in exchange for bread; but when he did so sing, I wonder how it worked. Did he feel that he received his singing's worth in supper? Did his listeners feel that they received their supper's worth in singing?

Payment for poetry is a matter as precarious for the purchaser as for the poet, because people who pay good money for verse usually have very little money for verse or anything else. Only poor people buy poetry, or want to. The number of inglorious Miltons is small compared with the number of inglorious Mæcenases who would be princely patrons of poesy if Providence had not made them paupers instead. Rich men are too thrifty to risk their dollars on rhymes; and unfortunately for that poor man who loves a lyric as the drunkard loves a dram, the bookseller is also too canny to venture his money on the exhibition of any lyric wares not tested by time. Bookshop counters do not afford us pauper-purchasers the opportunity to taste and sample before we buy, since it is not the Classics that we want, for long since they became flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone; but we crave the magic and the melody of present-day song. Poetry by mail-order is hazardous, for often enough some fugitive rhyme that has lured us with promise proves

Digitized by Google

the only one of its kind, and the book turns blank in our hands, when we had thought we were buying beauty, and had gone without boots and beefsteak to buy it, too! Yet whether the result of purchasing poetry from a publisher's catalogue, "sight unseen," be delight or delusion, we who have an unquenchable thirst for the wine of song will probably go on daring our last dollar for the draught divine.

I began to be a drunkard on my seventh birthday. On that date there came into my life a volume called "The Child's Book of Songs." Before that time poetry had rung about my head, but somewhat over my head, too; now first I entered into my heritage of sheer inebriety. At seven I was rawly sensitive to the *Weltschmerz:* perhaps a little playmate had been whipped; perhaps there was sinister crêpe fluttering on a neighbor's door; perhaps remorse for my sins shook me with wild tears — in the "Book of Songs" there was glorious forgetting! "Souls of poets dead and gone" welcomed me to their Elysium from a world, even at seven years, too grim and gray. That book walked and worked and slept and played with me — always alone, for I knew better than to ask any companion to share my orgies of joy. Alone in

Digitized by Google

some secret spot I declaimed "The Battle of Ivry," or shuddered as the high tide crept up the coast of Lincolnshire, or, daughter of Netherby, I was swept from dance-lit hall to starlit midnight flight, the bride of Lochinvar. Thus first I tippled drink divine; and ever since I opened the wrappings of that fateful gift-book, to find the wine of wonder, every volume of poetry has seemed to me a sealed flagon of fairy mead. Ever since then I have been insatiably athirst; alas for the obduracy of life, which always, before I may lift the draught to my lips, prosaically demands, "Show me first your penny"!

Have you ever pared down a budget with a view to buying song with the scrapings — deleting furbelows and feathers, and even shoe-leather, in order to have perhaps a whole frenzied fiver to spend on poesy? For five dollars you may buy at least three whole poets and a fraction of another. Fortunately for such as I am, the new wine is still cheap. Only the old poets, long bottled and labeled, are put up in fancy editions. For pence blessedly few one may envisage Ralph Hodgson's Eve:

> "Eve, with her basket, was
> Deep in the bells and grass,
> Wading in bells and grass,
> Up to her knees.

Digitized by Google

"Picture that orchard sprite,
Eve, with her body white,
Supple and smooth to her
Slim finger-tips.
Wondering, listening,
Listening, wondering,
Eve with a berry
Half-way to her lips."

For less than one round silver dollar one may be enwrapped in the wizardry of Walter de la Mare:

"'T was autumn daybreak gold and wild,
When past St. Ann's grey tower they shuffled;
Three beggars spied a fairy-child
In crimson mantle muffled.

"The daybreak lighted up her face
All pink and sharp and emerald-eyed."

For but a few shillings one may throb to the immortal pulse of Israel in Lola Ridge's "Ghetto." Is he not worth buying, her patriarch of the push-carts?

"His soul is like a rock
That bears a front worn smooth
To the coarse friction of the sea,
And unperturbed he keeps his bitter peace.

"What if a rigid arm and stuffed blue shape,
Backed by a nickel star,
Does prod him on,
Taking his proud patience for humility —

Digitized by Google

All gutters are as one
To that old race that has been thrust
From off the curb-stones of the world —
And he smiles with the pale irony
Of one who holds
The wisdom of the Talmud stored away
In his mind's lavender."

For less than the cost of a dinner one may walk with Francis Ledwidge down a leafy alley melodious with blackbirds and white with thorn in blossom. Surely for such as him there are green Irish lanes in heaven — "If it were not so, I would have told you!"

Surely a day must dawn when earth's merchantmen will no longer stupidly sell their young poets, both those mute and those musical, to that red customer, War.

"I saw with open eyes
Singing-birds sweet
Sold in the shops
For the people to eat,
Sold in the shops of
Stupidity Street.

"I saw in vision
The worm in the wheat,
And in the shops nothing
For people to eat;
Nothing for sale in
Stupidity Street."

I have perhaps sufficiently proved my

Digitized by Google

claim to inebriety. That first cup, at seven, yet fires my veins with thirst. Two characteristics of that infantine indulgence persist. For one, I still, for the most part, drink alone. Few people can share my uncritical abandon to sheer joy, I, who

> "When a bird sings me heart-music,
> Don't 'spicion the size of its throat."

Others rebuke me that I desire new wine rather than be content with the old. I grant that the world would not be the same place without Wordsworth, or Keats, or Browning; but surely the older poets, now securely immortal, remembering their hard entrance into fame, would have their lovers welcome new singers. I hold there is strength and sparkle in the wine that our young poets are pouring; and yet so few of my acquaintance share my conviction that, when a fresh pennyworth of poetry comes to me from the publishers, I still, as at seven, quaff in solitude.

In another respect the poetry of to-day appeals in the same way that poetry first affected me; it is still to me romance and release. The world at present is dark with portent and pain. But in the murk how many young singers are chanting to an unseen morning! Probably these are not great poets, but they

Digitized by Google

are brave and sincere, and often they are jocund with an inexplicable confidence. The wine of their singing is a magic dawn-draught, strengthening one against the darkness of the night. There is striking individuality in the notes one hears, as if little birds, each alone in his dark covert, should, each alone, break forth with his own message of hope, each severally convinced of sunrise. A penny is small price to pay for such high hopefulness, and for the faith that, when there is such confident choiring, there must surely be a dawn.

Digitized by Google

A LITTLE EXCURSION IN A HYMN-BOOK

IN the protests aroused by a recent attempt to remodel old hymns, one finds matter for wistful amusement, when one considers the nature of the protesters and the nature of hymns. Confidently adult, confidently agnostic, why should we care if some man tampers with our ancient songs of sanctuary? Why should we not regard as laudably scientific and logical this effort to renovate the hymn-book? But that is just the trouble, for hymns are not scientific and logical, and neither are we. It may have been decades since we have sung or heard a hymn, but we like to think that somewhere people are singing the old familiar words of our childhood. In pouring new terms into old tunes Professor Patton has not perceived the vital fact that a hymn to be a hymn must be a little obsolete.

The old hymns are the landmarks of our infancy, gracious and glamorous with memories. We do not wish old haunted rooms torn down to make place for socialist sanitation; we do not wish hoary trees clipped of excrescent but wonder-working imagery. To

Digitized by Google

open the hymn-book and wander there at will is to evoke, as nothing else can do, the mystic mood of our childhood's faith. We have not forgotten the geography of that gentle land whence all the paths led skyward. It was there, rapt by its majesty, we watched Imperial Salem rise; there, breathing the incense of spiced breezes, we sailed to India's coral strand; there that our boisterous feet grew soft in stepping "by cool Siloam's shady rill," and our awed hearts were storm-swept by a vision of "cross-crowned Calvary." In that haunted domain was drama to quicken the pulse:

"Christian, dost thou see them
On the holy ground?
How the troops of Midian
Prowl and prowl around?"

In that "sweet and blessed country," made mystical with music, heard melodies were sweet, but those unheard were sweeter. Can any power of poet or artist paint for us such a vision of singing hosts as:

"Ten thousand times ten thousand,"

or:

"What rush of alleluias
Fills all the earth and sky!
What ringing of a thousand harps
Bespeaks the triumph nigh!"

Digitized by Google

Where save in that blessed Bethlehem of our childhood's possession can we listen with the old throbbing Christmas joy when the herald angels sing? No, in that fair old land, we will allow no one to remove one stone of association builded out of the beauty of old words.

As a child would be careless of forgotten architects, so we are indifferent to the authorship of hymns. We attach certain names to the making of sacred song — Watts and Wesley, Heber and Havergal — but rarely examine with critical attention the characteristics of the groups belonging to each. Holy and humble men and women of God have composed our praises for us, and in the power of their words over our imaginations their personalities have been obliterated. An examination of the index of authors shows no name of literary reputation. Only one great poet ever contributed songs to the liturgy of worship, and that was David. One stops to ponder the reason, for it is not that our famous singers have been without faith. The authors of "Saul" and of "In Memoriam" were men of fervor as intense as that of Watts, yet neither Browning nor Tennyson ever wrote a hymn. A comparison of "Saul" with "The Son of God goes forth to war" might assist toward the explanation. The first expresses

Digitized by Google

the religion of an adult, the second that of a child. Both types of religious expression are equally true and vital; they are merely different. Milton's "Hymn of the Nativity" and Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven" are great religious poems; they address themselves to adult intelligence, adult emotion, adult æsthetic sense. They differ in quality from hymns as poets differ from hymn-makers in their intense intellectuality. The test of a great hymn is that it shall not be beyond the intelligence, the emotion, and the imagination of a child of ten. This is why we resent any retouching of our old canticles that destroys their sacred simplicity, their flashing pictures, their vivid personal God. Our brains may have substituted the words "creative energy" for "Lord God almighty" in our view of the universe, but we allow no one to do so in the hymns of our childhood.

The trouble with remaking ancient song to fit present convictions is that such effort must necessarily reflect only the personal creed, while a hymn must both express and address universal emotion and conviction. Socialism and pacifism have not yet so leavened the lump that there is an instant response to their appeal either in a liturgy or out of it. The theorists are always the grown-

Digitized by Google

ups of their generation, the last people to be chosen to write hymns for the rest, who both in principles and practices have not yet put away childish things. Hymns are the voice of the heart, and most of us are old-fashioned in our hearts, however new-fangled in our heads. There are few instances when a modern hymn has been able to stir emotions so that they react to new words with all the instancy with which they throb to those hallowed by long usage. Two notable examples are "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and Kipling's "Recessional."

The adequacy of appeal in these two great lyrics by no means disproves the inadequacy of most attempts to write hymns for one's contemporaries, and by no means excuses the greater sacrilege of rewriting. We smile at the charge of inconsistency in our lusty singing of "Jerusalem the Golden," and of

> "O Paradise, O Paradise,
> Who doth not long for rest?"

— we who frankly doubt a Paradise, or certainly doubt whether we'll find rest there. Our misty conceptions of a life to come are as alien to the plea,

> "Rescue me from fires undying,"

as they are to the thought of

> "Those endless Sabbaths the blessed ones see."

Digitized by Google

Yet we should resent the removal of "Dies iræ" from our ritual, no matter how far we have removed its theology from our creed. Even triple-armored pacifists have no intention of depriving the child element in the imagination of its "Onward, Christian soldiers," or of "We march, we march to victory."

To delete from our hymnology all allusions to "war, depravity, and woe," as Professor Patton desires, is completely to destroy the emotional cogency of our hymns. We readily admit that words and theology have become antiquated, but we are not inconsistent in retaining both, for the incongruity is purely superficial. Not the matter but the mood is what makes a hymn. Consistency is the concern of the intellect, but even our intellect may approve our spirit's reverence for the form of our consecrated songs, for they are tested, not by the thoughts they express, but by the feelings they arouse.

Perhaps what makes a hymn precious is our homesickness for the days when its meaning was as convincing to us as its mood is even yet compelling. That is why even the most rational of us resent any desecration of those years when our faith was that of children. There is in "Clayhanger" a telling scene where Edwin and Hilda, he alien and con-

Digitized by Google

demnatory, she alien but sympathetic, are attending the Sunday-School centenary and listening to the hymns that rock through those phalanxed squares of worshipers.

The multitude is singing:

> "When I survey the wondrous cross
> On which the Prince of Glory died,
> My richest gain I count but loss,
> And pour contempt on all my pride."

"Hilda shook her head.

"'What's the matter?' he asked, leaning toward her from his barrel.

"'That's the most splendid religious verse ever written!' she cried passionately. 'You can say what you like. It's worth while believing anything, if you can sing words like that and mean them!'

"She had an air of restrained fury.

"But fancy her exciting herself over a hymn!"

Edwin's surprise is analogous to ours when we read the protests called forth by the retouching of sacred songs. Fancy our exciting ourselves over a hymn! It is because we know that we have right, if not reason, on our side. No one shall profane the gentle old ways where we walked with God once long ago. Our reverence for our hymns is our reverence for the imperishable child-soul within us. It

Digitized by Google

reveals the unconscious conviction that after all somewhere there is a kingdom of heaven, and that somewhere within sight and sound of it lies our childhood's holy land, the kingdom of hymns.

Digitized by Google

PRINT AND PULPIT

MUCH criticism now assailing the churches would not be made if critics would remember some facts of present-day history. One reason why people do not go to church to hear sermons is that they can get them without going. The printing-press has superseded the pulpit exactly as the movie has superseded the stage. People to-day receive their impressions, not through the ear, but through the eye. This may be regrettable, but it is a fact that should be admitted by any one inclined to two conclusions, alike false, that men no longer preach and that men no longer heed in the old way. Truth has never been a commodity to be confined to four stone walls; it is but natural that the method of its communication from a preacher to his people should change to fit contemporary conditions.

The first requisite of preaching is publicity, and the second is liberty of utterance. While some of the sincerest sermons of all time have been spoken under all the auspices of orthodoxy and convention, truth has always had a tendency to slip out of church and synagogue

Digitized by Google

and temple to the closer communion of the street-corner and the market-place. The common people still hear gladly, but with their eyes open to the printed page rather than with their ears open to any pulpit. The Church is not responsible for the temporary thinning of congregations due to this condition. Critics who argue the decay of religion should remember that the greatest sermon of history was preached on a hillside, because its creed and its congregation were too great for any synagogue, and that to-day, for the same reason, some of the noblest teachers of its tenets are preaching, not from church platforms, but in print.

The growing religious earnestness of magazine and newspaper articles proves the religious receptivity of readers. Idealism is no longer furtive, but frank, in many a periodical. People to-day want to hear, not about doctrine, but about doing; and they are more confident of hearing about applied creed — practice rather than theology — in magazines than in churches. Throughout history men have gone to church — temple, synagogue, mosque, or cathedral — for two reasons: to worship and to hear sermons. To-day, for the popular conscience, worship is more and more expressed in works and less and

Digitized by Google

less in liturgy, and sermons are listened to in proportion as they tell, not what to believe, but what to do.

The transference of the pulpit to the printed page presents certain advantages both for the preacher and the hearer. The man who is inspired to inspire his fellow man has fewer restrictions on the freedom of his utterance if he speaks on paper than if from a pulpit. The democracy of our age resents the hieratic as much as the autocratic. The religious man resists equally the social severance and the separation from practical affairs expected of a clergyman; but so long as print is open to him he is not denied a pulpit. Perhaps he is fired to put his faith to the daily testing of a secular profession, to be a consecrated doctor or lawyer or merchant. If so, he will have all the weight of his own applied Christianity behind him when he stops to preach — on paper. Dr. Cabot, for example, has not needed a church for the preaching of much straight and simple religion.

A man devout and devoted may feel greater freedom in a periodical than in a pulpit. He is not restricted by loyalty to a denominational creed nor to a congregation whose salaried servant he is. It is inspiring to be able to be a preacher without having to cease to be

Digitized by Google

a man with men, and without having to cling to a creed a dozen times outgrown. To-day both premiers and presidents may preach without ceasing to guide nations, and with only self-imposed adherence to Welsh Methodism or Scotch Presbyterianism. Nor can a live man be blamed that he should prefer the wider audience that print offers him. It is not the fault of the Church, but of the cable and the telegraph and the press, that a preacher to-day may have all the world for his congregation.

The Church as a human institution has never decayed, and never will decay, but religion is so vital an energy that it is always finding new ways to reach people. An observer should not be dismayed by any of these manifestations, but should in charity remember that both preacher and people are but human. The hesitant nature of human faith makes the advantages of the published over the spoken sermon as great for the listener as for the preacher. The listener in his turn is not restricted to any one creed or to any church membership. He may shape and study and apply his convictions without proclaiming them. Many a man may, often unconsciously, heed the printed word who would not have the temerity to enter a church,

Digitized by Google

where his fellow members may observe his reactions. As a mere reader of sermons he is committed to no creed or communion. Both his faith and his practice remain entirely private. Such secrecy, as of Nicodemus, may perhaps be neither courageous nor creditable, but it is a human tendency to be acknowledged. The approach to faith is often shy, but Nicodemus was received.

For both preacher and listener the printed sermon has the advantage of entire personal liberty. Application of creed to conduct is for each a matter of his own conscience. A preacher may write his teaching without practicing it; a listener may read without following. The utterance is as uncircumscribed as were the words cried to the wind two thousand years ago in Palestine; by virtue of the printed pulpit to-day a man may repeat those words or a man may listen to them, and then, exactly as on the lakeside or the mountain path long ago, he may follow the word or forego it.

Digitized by Google

GIFT-BOOKS AND BOOK-GIFTS

AMONG the Christmas commodities urged upon the purchasing public by booksellers' catalogues and counters, there is one that becomes each year more prominent, namely, that literary anomaly known as the "gift-book." I wonder how other volumes, more obscure, regard the gift-book. Do they covet his bad eminence, beholding his jeweled dress, luxurious trappings, and coffined ease? Or do they, on the contrary, rather hug the dustiest corner of the shelf, preferring it to the splendor of the sarcophagus, and shuddering before the terrible secret of his exalted position?

How quickly the titles of the favored few come to one's finger-ends as one begins to count! "The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table," "Portuguese Sonnets," "The Eve of Saint Agnes," "Sesame and Lilies," "The Rubáiyát." What a curious concourse the authors would make if they were brought forth in a company as often as are their books. Matter so diverse, yet so incessantly combined, would seem suggestive of strange psychological phenomena to be argued from the

Digitized by Google

characteristics of gift-books, but investigation along this line would prove most misleading. In a study of the nature of the gift-book, you must avoid all consideration of its contents. Gift-books are chosen either from the shelf of the classics or from that of the newest comers, but in one respect the two are always alike: they are never books marketable on their own merits; to be sold they must be lifted to the dignity of becoming presents. The classic group is generally floated on its classicism, plus much majesty of binding and of boxing; only rarely is it judged to need illustration: the contemporary group, on the other hand, depends for its appeal entirely on illustration; it trails over the counter a procession of pictures that blinds the purchaser to the width of margins and the paucity of reading matter. The difference between the gift-book which is a classic and the gift-book which is a contemporary is that one opens the latter; one never opens the former.

The two types become instantly recognizable as one remembers the last Christmas, and anticipates the next. Santa Claus's pack always brings much matter for solid reflection, however delicately our parcels be done up in tissue paper and bright ribbon. One always receives one's quota of gift-books. I

Digitized by Google

wonder what becomes of all the "Portuguese Sonnets" in the world.

In our Christmas collection the gift-book must be classified in the heap labeled the "Present Perfunctory." It fulfills the two conditions of its classification, it is nakedly useless and ornate. Those two adjectives represent the basic characteristics of all the presents urged by all the holiday advertisers. The gift-book is but another recourse of the giver who wishes to give but not to think. Does a real book-buyer ever buy a gift-book — for himself or for anybody else?

The real book-buyer, however, need indulge no contempt for the purchaser of gift-books, who trustingly and uncritically allows the bookseller to choose his Christmas presents for him. The manner of the selection marks the whole affair from beginning to end as politely impersonal. In the publisher's initial choice he never intrudes the slightest personal bias in his selection from established reputations, from the great Have-Beens, the famous Once-Were-Reads. The names of the gift-books never vary from Christmas to Christmas. In the publishing, purchasing, giving, and receiving of a gift-book, there is a scrupulous avoidance of any suggestion of individual preference. For this fact one should

Digitized by Google

be profoundly grateful, for the gift-bearing season is rendered innocuous exactly in proportion to its number of impersonal presents.

In our grown-up Kris-Kringling there still lingers a good deal of the Gift Critical — survival of the switch for the bad child, the sweetmeat for the good. Now the less evidence of personal reflection in a present, the safer. The gift-book fills a need, it is a politeness that penetrates no man's privacy; an expression of good-will left on the doorstep, not thrust into the heart.

Upon my shelves I can find no sharper contrast than that between the gift-book and the book-gift, the latter being a volume selected because it represents the giver's taste, or else what he thinks is my taste, or, still worse, what he thinks ought to be my taste if it is n't. All three revelations are perilous. "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are," declare our paternal sellers of cereals. "Tell me what you read, and I will tell you what you are," is a process even more heart-searching.

There is nothing more harmlessly impersonal than the gift-book; there is nothing more audaciously personal than the book as gift. The latter represents individual discov-

Digitized by Google

ery, and the impulse to share the delight with a friend; yet, should the friend fail to share, what a gulf suddenly yawns between the giver and the recipient of some book that in an instant becomes an accusation of uncongeniality! You can forgive a person who gives you an unbecoming tie, you can condone color blunders, but you cannot forgive a friend who gives you a book unbecoming to your form of thought, you cannot forgive character-blindness. And should the book-gift go a step farther, should you have reason to suspect it of the donor's effort at proselytism, of an intention to convert you to opinions, human or literary, that you are not ready to accept, then the poor little book-gift becomes that most dangerous kind of Christmas remembrance, the Gift Reformative, the switch in the Christmas stocking. In giving or receiving, not a gift-book, but a book-gift, a volume chosen by friend for friend, much is risked, but perhaps with reason. There are books to which a friend has introduced me which have relinked our hearts together with chains of gold and gladness, or, by another figure, have been gates into a domain of delight where three may wander in a joyous privacy of possession, my friend and I, and the author to whom he introduced me.

Digitized by Google

Still the principle is unaltered that the giving of books is a perilous matter. Those who keep the safe side will confine themselves to the giving, not of book-gifts, but of gift-books, that wise provision of Providence and the publisher. Both these agencies are aware of two facts for the foolhardy — that reading is of all concerns most personal, and that gift-giving should be of all courtesies most impersonal: so both supply the need by putting into our hands the gift-book. The characteristic that best fits a book to be a gift is the characteristic that most unfits it to be a book. I reveal the secret of the sarcophagus referred to at the beginning: the gift-book is a book that is never read! That is why its fellow volumes may well shudder at its position, however seeming-splendid; for while it is safe and stupid to give a gift-book, safer and stupider to receive one, how much worse to be one!

THE END

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
U . S . A

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

BOOK DUE-WHO
CANCELLED
FEB 21 1978

MAY 10 1941

Digitized by Google